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THOUSANDTH ANNIVERSARY

The Christianization of Kievan Russia

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Editorial

In 988, a thousand years ago, the people of Kiev waded into the Dnieper River, in obedience to a decision taken by their prince, Vladimir, and underwent mass baptism. This "was an event of great historical significance", writes Metropolitan Juvenaly, a high dignitary of the Russian Orthodox Church, in his contribution to this issue, "bringing as it did a major part of the population of eastern Europe into the family of Christian nations".

Vladimir's decision had an immediate bearing on the fortunes of his Kiev-based principality known as Rus', a grouping of east Slav tribes from which the Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian Slav peoples of the USSR would later emerge. In the short term, Rus' was enabled to assert its position vis-à-vis the Byzantine Empire and the other Christian States of Europe. But Vladimir's decision also had a more lasting influence on the later history and identity of the peoples who inherited its legacy. In the words of Pope John Paul II, head of the Roman Catholic Church, in an Apostolic Letter published on the occasion of the millennium of the baptism of Kievan Rus', "The elements of the Christian heritage have imbued the life and culture of those nations.... making room for a totally original form of European culture, indeed of human culture itself."

This issue of the *Unesco Courier* is a contribution to a number of activities which Unesco is organizing to mark this anniversary, including a symposium on "the significance of the introduction of Christianity in Rus' for the development of European and world culture and civilization", which will be held at the Organization's Paris Headquarters from 28 to 30 June 1988.

We also pay tribute in this issue to three poets who all shared, in addition to talent, a hunger for freedom: an Englishman, Lord Byron, who was born 200 years ago; a Frenchman, René Char, who died this year; and a Peruvian, César Vallejo, who died fifty years ago. Also commemorated in the following pages is an important act of liberation—the abolition of slavery in Brazil 100 years ago. The granting of liberty by decree, by a stroke of the pen, was followed by a hard struggle to enjoy its fruits on the part of a black Brazilian community which is only today starting to discover its own identity and forms of expression.

Editor-in-Chief: Edouard Glissant

Masterwork of medieval Russian art

The Old Testament Trinity *(above and front cover) was painted by the great Russian icon painter Andrei Rublev (c.1370-c.1430) some time in the first quarter of the 15th century for the Trinity and St. Sergius monastery at Zagorsk, near Moscow. The icon depicts the visit of three angels to Abraham and Sarah as recorded in the Bible. Rublev treats this traditional subject in an original manner, retaining only the three angels, who are depicted with gentle grace in a circular composition where all is harmony and spirituality. The three figures are also those of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which asserts that God is one in substance but three in "person" (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and is fundamental to Orthodox theology. In the 16th century, on the orders of Tsar Boris Godunov, the* **Trinity** *was given an encasement* **(oklad)** *of vermeil and precious stones (see front cover), which was removed at the beginning of the 20th century when the icon was restored. Since 1929 this masterpiece of Russian art has been exhibited in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow without the encasement, in all its original splendour (above).*

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The baptism of Kiev

BY BORIS V. RAUSCHENBACH

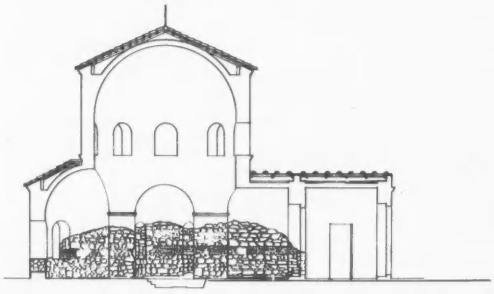
A thousand years ago, the birth of a Christian nation

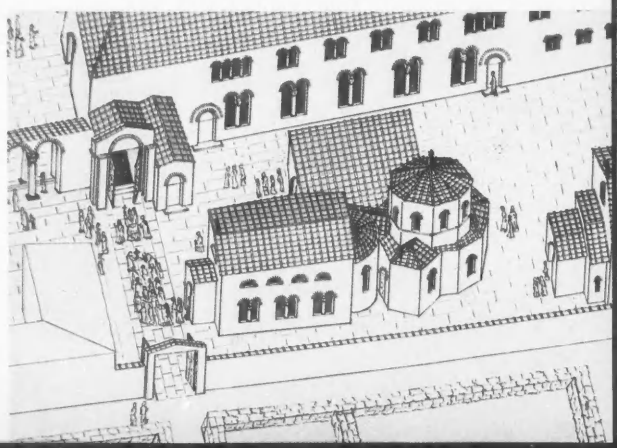
Photo O. Makarov © APN, Moscow

A thousand years ago, in 988, the Slav principality of Kievan Rus', or Kievan Russia, came into being as one of a cluster of Christian States in Europe. Its emergence was one of the far-reaching consequences of a bold feudal reform of the State structures which was carried out by Grand Prince Vladimir, who wished to put his principality on the same footing as the developed feudal monarchies of that time.

In 980 Vladimir was at the head of a loose federation of Slav tribes, which could only be held together by the use of armed force (or at least the constant threat of its use). In order to strengthen this federation, the young prince took two important decisions. First, he settled in Kiev, intent on keeping his hands on the reins of government, which his predecessors had abandoned for months or even years while leading military expeditions. Second, he endeavoured to unite the Slav tribes ideologically—as we should say today—by means of a religion common to them all.

Once established in Kiev, Vladimir began to build fortifications to the east of the town, thus making it clear that he meant to stay in the capital and defend it against nomads. It was essential to the success of the radical State reforms that life in the city should be peaceful and safe.





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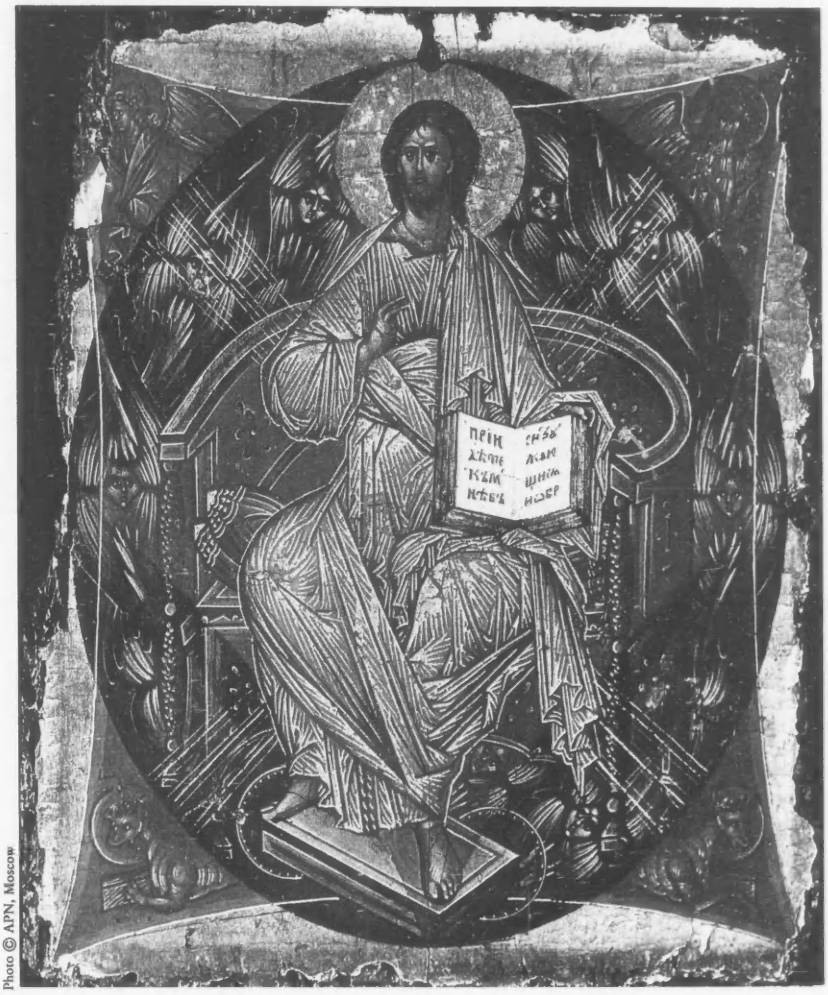

Photo © APN, Moscow

The Saviour in Glory, *an icon painted by Andrei Rublev around 1420 and today preserved in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Christ is depicted on His throne surrounded by seraphim and the 4 symbols of the Evangelists (see also colour page 21).*

A thousand years ago, in 988, Vladimir, grand prince of Kiev, who had recently been converted to Christianity, bade the peoples over which he ruled to follow his example, in order to consolidate their political and spiritual union. Far left, imposing bronze statue in Kiev (4.5 metres high and standing on a pedestal 16 metres high) shows Vladimir holding a cross in one hand and his princely headgear in the other. The monument was inaugurated in 1853. Vladimir later became the hero of popular epics and was canonized by the Orthodox Church. According to the Soviet specialist Sergei Beliaev, Vladimir was baptized in the baptistery of the Uvarov basilica at the Byzantine town of Chersonesus in the Crimea (near the modern city of Sevastopol). Left, drawing of a reconstitution of the baptistery. Above left, vertical section of the baptistery as it was in the 10th century, showing the remains of the walls as they are today. Drawings were executed as part of a project to rebuild the baptistery.

To solve the second problem—the unification of the allied tribes—he first of all gave "equal rights" to all the main tribal gods (and consequently to those groups of the clergy that had most influence). A traveller arriving in Kiev from afar could see that the god of his own tribe was worshipped in Kiev as well as the Kievan gods. Six heathen gods were worshipped in Kiev; traces of these cults have been found by modern archaeologists.

These measures taken by Prince Vladimir strengthened the State. But it soon became clear that the path on which he had embarked so successfully was actually leading nowhere. There were two main reasons for this. First, even after Vladimir's innovations the heathen religion perpetuated the old way of life. It suited a patriarchal system, but it was a major obstacle to the formation of the new production relationships of nascent feudalism. A new law, new customs, a new social awareness and a new approach to the world were all needed. The old paganism could not provide these things. But they were all to be found in Byzantium.

The second reason was that Kievan Rus' could not attain equality with the leading countries of Europe and the East, it could not, to use a modern expression, reach "world class" unless it borrowed from those countries a knowledge of crafts, building techniques, science, culture and much else. And all this, too, was to be found in Byzantium.

Vladimir's choice of religion was largely conditioned by

The "Chronicle of Radziwill" (named after the Lithuanian prince to whom it belonged) is a late 15th-century illustrated manuscript containing over 600 miniatures, many of which are based on far older models. Far right, miniature showing Princess Olga, the first pagan ruler (945-964) of Kievan Russia to accept the Christian faith. Right, miniature bearing the date 1071 depicts an encounter between Christians and pagans. At left are the prince with his halberd and a bishop with his cross, accompanied by their followers. At right, a wizard in a long white robe with wide sleeves, also accompanied by his attendants.

history, but it was also due to his wisdom as a statesman. Rus' had already forged quite strong economic links with Byzantium, which was not far away. The Bulgarians, who were the kinsfolk of the people of Rus', had accepted Christianity about 100 years before, largely thanks to the work of Cyril and Methodius, who had developed a Slav alphabet and preached Christianity in the Slav language. Vladimir's decision may well have been influenced by the fact that in the Orthodox Church, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, people could worship God in a language they understood.

At this time Byzantium was still at the height of its glory. The tradition of Antiquity still survived there. Homer and other classical writers of Antiquity were studied in its schools, and Plato and Aristotle lived on in the philosophical disputes that took place there. The Byzantine form of Christianity met the needs of a feudal society, and therefore fully conformed with Vladimir's intentions. And at the same time it solved the problem of providing a single religion for all the tribes of ancient Rus'.

Neither Rus' nor Byzantium regarded the proposed acceptance of Christianity as a purely religious step. Byzantium's view, expressed in simplistic terms, was that since Rus' was turning to the Orthodox faith and the head of the Orthodox Church was the Byzantine patriarch and the emperor, Rus' automatically became a vassal of Byzantium.

But the State of ancient Rus' was expanding and was already quite powerful, and had fought Byzantium successfully several times; it did not intend to play the role of a vassal. Vladimir and his court had other ideas. They thought that the acceptance of Christianity and the adoption of Byzantine culture and skills along with Christianity should in no way diminish the independence of Rus'. As the prince saw it, Rus' should become a State friendly to Byzantium, but should retain its entire sovereignty.

The introduction of Christianity was a gradual process; authorities today believe that it took around 100 years—a very short time in view of the vast size of the country. The Christianization of Sweden and Norway, which began about the same time as that of Rus', took 250 and 150 years respectively.

Vladimir's political reform released a potential that had been gradually building up within the society of Rus'. The rapid development of the country shows how timely the reform was.

Master builders were invited to come from Byzantium to Rus', where they erected stone churches and other buildings and adorned them with frescoes, mosaics and icons. Russians worked with them, learning skills of which they had known nothing before. The next generation erected elaborate buildings in the towns of Rus', with hardly any help from foreigners. Changes took place in agriculture, too, and horticulture was introduced into Rus' at this time.

The clergy who had come to Rus' from Byzantium did not merely conduct religious services in the new churches; they also trained "national leaders" for the Church, and knowledge and literacy spread widely as a result. Schools were opened, and Vladimir made the children of the nobility attend them, despite the mothers' protests. He sent young men to study in other countries. A chronicle was begun. Like other developed States, Kievan Rus' started to mint its own gold coins.

Little by little, ancient Rus' became a State with a new high culture, although it would be wrong to think that it did not have an authentic culture of its own in pagan times. This pagan culture was to live on for a considerable time, and it imparted certain unique features to the art of ancient Rus'. What was new was mainly that body of knowledge that had already been acquired by cultured peoples throughout the world, ranging from the works of Aristotle to techniques for building stone arches.

But rapid as the changes of Vladimir's day were, his feudal reform was not completed in his lifetime. More time was needed, and Vladimir's work was finished by his son, Yaroslav the Wise. As the chroniclers say, Vladimir ploughed the land, Yaroslav sowed the seed, and we (later generations) have reaped the harvest.

Yaroslav was as zealous as his father had been in continuing the reform. Like his father, he built fortifications to defend his lands, this time mainly in the west. Like his father, he saw to it that nothing held up the feudal reforms; and he showed just as much energy in building, clearly striving to make Kiev the equal of Byzantium (later Constantinople). He did much to develop trade; and he began to strike silver coins as well as gold.

Yaroslav's principal aim, however, was to build up a

Photos © Nauka publishers, Moscow

Engraved on this white stone cross is the so-called "Hymn to the Cross", an important specimen of Russian writing in the 12th century. The cross once stood near the church of the Intercession of the Virgin, on the river Nerl (see photo 22, page 15), and is today preserved in the municipal museum at Bogolyubovo.

Photo M. Iurchenko © APN, Moscow

genuinely Russian intelligentsia (insofar as such a concept can be used with reference to that period). Vladimir had not had time to do this. Literacy in itself was not enough; steps had to be taken to ensure that Kievan Rus' did not have to "import" Greek clergy, that it had its own scholars, writers and philosophers, and that it could, if necessary, wage an ideological struggle, notably against Byzantine imperial ideology. It is not surprising that Russian monasticism is first heard of in Yaroslav's day.

Inventories dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (earlier ones have not survived) show that most of the books in the monastic libraries were secular rather than religious. There were chronicles, historical records, "itineraries" or geographical works, philosophical and military treatises, and classical works such as the *History of the Jewish War* by Flavius Josephus. A learned monk must indeed have had an all-round education.

Chronicles such as *The Russian Primary Chronicle* and polemical works (often with a definite political undercurrent) were written in the monasteries. Books were copied, too. We are indebted to copyists in the monasteries for the fact that we can read the ancient chronicles that have come down to us (works such as *The Song of Igor's Campaign*). Icons were painted by masters such as Alimpi of Kiev. The Russian clergy who replaced those from Byzantium were trained in the monasteries.

In 1051, after the death of the Greek metropolitan of Kiev, Yaroslav himself (acting without the emperor or the patriarch of Constantinople) "having called together the bishops", for the first time appointed a Russian metropolitan, Hilarion, a priest in the prince's village of Berestovo. The Russian Orthodox Church was asserting its independence. Metropolitan Hilarion was certainly a man of great ability. His work "On Law and Grace", a remarkable example of the literature of ancient Rus', was a trenchant ideological weapon in the battle for the independence of Kievan Rus'.

The work of literacy teaching and school building continued under Yaroslav (and not only in Kiev). We have evidence that a school for 300 children was opened in Novgorod in 1030, at which children began to "learn to read books". Schools for girls were founded. Gradually all sectors of the population learnt to read and write, as we know from

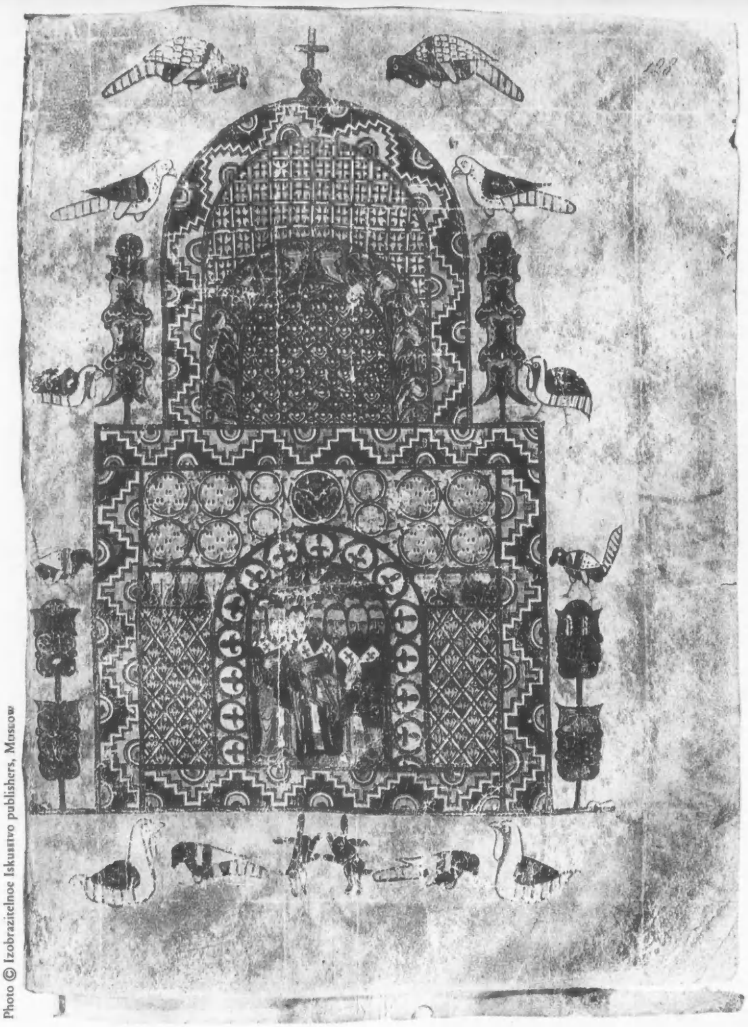

Photo © Izobrazitelnoe Iskusstvo publishers, Moscow

inscriptions that have been found on strips of birch bark. Yaroslav himself "was diligent in reading books by night and day", and he also "collected many books, translated books from the Greek to the Slav language, and wrote many books". Culture was spreading rapidly among the people of ancient Rus'.

Civilized States cannot exist without written laws. Yaroslav introduced a number of written statutes, including "Russian Law". In a word, under Yaroslav, who completed Vladimir's reform, Kievan Rus' became a freely developing feudal State, the equal of any State in the civilized world. It was surpassed by no other country, either in economic and social structure (feudalism, which continued to develop) or in culture, trade or the arts of war.

The introduction of Christianity, which became the ideological basis of the feudal State system of ancient Rus', played a progressive role in the early Middle Ages. The old division into tribes was a thing of the past. A people had taken shape as a State, and from it, in time, emerged the Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians. ■

The earliest works of Old Russian literature date from the late 10th century. Most of them have come down to us in the form of collections of texts known as **Izborniki**. *Above, frontispiece of the* **Izbornik of 1073**, *one of the oldest of these manuscripts. Based on Bulgarian texts translated from Greek, it was compiled for Prince Svyatoslav Yaroslavich and constitutes a kind of theological encyclopaedia containing over 380 articles by 25 authors.*

BORIS VIKTOROVICH RAUSCHENBACH is a Soviet Academician, winner of the Lenin Prize and a member of the International Academy of Astronautics. A specialist in mechanics, the theory of combustion and the control of the orientation of spacecraft, he was closely involved in the preparations for the first Soviet space flights. Among his published works are a study on spatial structures in ancient Russian painting (1975) and an essay on iconography as a means of conveying philosophical ideas (1985).

Beauty, sanctity and truth

The philosophy of the icon

BY SERGEI S. AVERINTSEV

IN the chronicles which relate the events that took place a thousand years ago in Russia, one episode stands out—that of the so-called "testing of faiths".

Prince Vladimir of Kiev had already talked with Muslims, Roman Catholics, and Khazars of Jewish persuasion. Then he heard a homily from a Greek "philosopher" who also gave him a lesson in biblical history and a brief catechism. This presentation, it seems, was the one that made the most favourable impression. The prince observed that the Greeks were "artful" and "captivating" speakers and that it was a pleasure to listen to them.

But homilies alone were not enough; nor did doctrine and question-and-answer sessions settle the matter entirely. Things had to be seen, as well as heard, to be believed. And so in AD 987 Vladimir, following the considered advice of his boyars[1] and elders, selected ten "virtuous and sensible men" and instructed them to obtain firsthand evidence of each faith, observing how God was worshipped, by whom and where.

The envoys carried out their mission. The movements and postures adopted by the Muslims at prayer in their mosques seemed strange to them. Nor did they find any aesthetic satisfaction in the Latin ritual: "We saw no trace of beauty there," they said. In Constantinople, however, "the beauty of the liturgy" to which they were introduced by the head of the Church, the patriarch, came as a revelation. "We knew not whether we were in Heaven or on Earth," they told the

1. His chief vassals. *Editor*

This late 14th-century **Dormition of the Virgin** *is thought to be the work of Theophanes the Greek, (c.1350-c.1410) an outstanding icon painter of Byzantine origin, or of one of his pupils. Strong dramatic tension is created by the vigour of the composition and the imposing dimensions of the figure of Christ.*

Photo © The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, Moscow

prince. "For surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere upon Earth, and we are at a loss how to describe it; we only know that God dwells there among men, and their ceremonies are fairer than those of other nations. We cannot forget that beauty." Time and time again the word "beauty" recurs in their account, and the envoys' experience of that beauty clinches their theological argument: "There, God dwells among the people." Now the prince could make his choice. "Then Vladimir replied, and said 'Where shall our baptism take place?'"

Thus, the aesthetic argument carried the greatest conviction. "God dwells among men", where beauty is; beauty is evidence—and indeed proof—of His presence.

Whatever the real events that inspired it, this story told in the "Tale of Bygone Years" (also known as *The Russian Primary Chronicle*), the most important historical work of early medieval Russia, reflects a manner of conceiving, or at least perceiving, the world that is in itself a historical fact. Even if the thinking of Prince Vladimir and his entourage was not exactly that described by the chronicler, and even if the entire anecdote is a fiction, it has a significance which is remarkably similar to that of a statement made during the first half of the present century by the Russian priest, scientist and philosopher Pavel Aleksandrovich Florensky (1882-1943) who wrote as follows about the most famous of Russian icons, Andrei Rublev's *Old Testament Trinity:* "Of all the philosophical proofs of the existence of God, that which carries the most conviction is not mentioned in any textbook; it may be resumed as follows: 'Rublev's *Trinity* exists, therefore God exists'."

Obviously, there is a great difference between the story told in the *Chronicle* and the extract from Florensky's philosophical treatise. The chronicler is artless, whereas Florensky deploys a paradox of whose subtlety he is fully aware. All that the texts have in common is the extreme simplicity of the logical proposition that beauty is not "merely" beauty; it is a criterion of truth—indeed of truth at its most profound, its most important.

An imaginary line drawn through the millennium that separates the episode of the "testing of faiths" from Florensky's postulate would pass through many points. On it one would find that conjunction of a sense of style with a sense of the sacred, expressed in icon painting, which the Old Believers[2] of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries inherited from ancient Russia and which is perceptively described in "The Sealed Angel", a story by the nineteenth-century writer Nikolai Leskov. In this story, a simple stone-mason, self-confessedly "of the most rustic education", evokes his favourite icon, a product of the seventeenth-century Stroganov school of icon painting: "The wings are outspread and white as snow; against the clear blue of the sky, feather stands out against feather, and strand against strand in the tuft of each feather. You look at these wings, and all the fear in you disappears; you pray 'Give me light', and suddenly everything falls still, and peace enters the soul".

Are we here in the presence of prayer or of ecstasy? It is not enough to say that the two are related. What counts is that this form of contemplation is just as exacting as prayer; here, indulgence in emotion, in sublimated sensibility, in art for art's sake, are kept at a far greater distance than, for example, in Gothic, Renaissance or Baroque art. At the same time, prayer cannot be dissociated from the plastic reality of the icon: there is a relation between the "peace that enters the soul" and the contrast of "strand against strand in the tuft of each feather". Here, as in the report by Prince Vladimir's emissaries and Florensky's aphorism, beauty confers *authenticity*. Beauty can be trusted, "and peace enters the soul". But it must be beauty of a very special kind.

It is precisely because so much depends on the quality of this beauty that it is subjected to such rigorous demands. In the seventeenth century, the turbulent archpriest Avvakum,

Photo A. Agbalian © Russian edition of the *Unesco Courier*, Progress Publishers, Moscow

Known as the* Ustyug Annunciation *from the town where it originated, this icon (now in the Tretyakov Gallery) is a work of the Novgorod school and dates from the 12th to the 13th centuries.

In Eastern Christian churches of Byzantine tradition, the iconostasis is a screen which separates the sanctuary, where the sacrament of the Eucharist is celebrated, from the nave, where the congregation stands. It is covered with icons (sacred images), and pierced by 3 doors. Far from being a barrier, the iconostasis symbolizes the boundary between the world of the senses and the spiritual world, and invites the faithful to the sacraments of the Eucharist. Right, the iconostasis and altar (18th to 19th century) of the cathedral of the archangel Michael in the Kremlin, Moscow (16th century).

Photo © APN, Paris

2. Followers of the ancient rites of the Russian Orthodox Church. *Editor*

leader of the Old Believers, raged against departures from the traditional aesthetics of icon painting, seeing in such "unseemly figurations" both a spiritual betrayal and a disintegration of the values inherent in the life of the people. What was painted "with carnal intent" forfeited its claims to reliability, to authenticity. It is interesting to note that at the height of the Roman Catholic-Orthodox rivalry during the reign of Ivan the Terrible (1547-1584), the Jesuit Antonio Possevino, who had vainly endeavoured to convert the Tsar to Catholicism and thus conserved a certain rancour towards Russia and things Russian, nevertheless found words of surprised admiration for the chasteness and sobriety which characterized both the icon and the manner of its veneration.

The hero of Dostoyevsky's novel *A Raw Youth* hears the pilgrim Makar Ivanovich use the archaic word *blagoobrazie*, and is deeply moved. The word conveys the idea of beauty as sanctity, sanctity as beauty, beauty at its most austere as a spur to asceticism.

In the psychology of the Russian people, beauty and asceticism are very closely related. Russian folklore offers an abundance of spiritual verses about the Tsarevich Ioasaf's renunciation of a life of luxury and his departure into the wilderness, where care for his bodily welfare is no longer of importance:

Here, in my wilderness,
Labouring, I must labour still;
Here, in my wilderness,
Fasting, I must further fast;
Here, in my wilderness,
Enduring, I must yet endure....

But this retreat, the scene of labour and endurance, is, as the folktales insist time and time again, a "*beautiful* wilderness"; not only a vale of suffering and grief, but also a plenitude of simple delights for eye and ear alike:

When spring in all her beauty comes back again,
Meadow and marsh will don their finest apparel,
And, in the leaf-decked wood,
The bird of paradise
Will sing with an archangel's voice.

Nowhere else, it seems, in Russian popular poesy is the beauty of Nature accorded such generous treatment as in these plaintive songs about a young prince's rejection of worldly temptations. Only the austere light in which the whole is bathed justifies the ecstasy that such beauty provokes, by providing the guarantee that beauty itself will not degenerate into forbidden *balovstvo* (frivolous indulgence), and will retain the quality of *blagoobrazie*.

When Florensky, too, attributed to beauty the force of argument, he chose Rublev's *Trinity* as his point of departure. We too shall refer to ancient Russian icon painting, and to Rublev its uncontested master, in making the more modest but still extremely important point that the traditional Russian attitude to beauty is not a romantic fabrication and that the examples cited above are in no sense exaggerated.

It may be argued that the story with which we began is after all only a legend. It is true that similar stories are told about the conversion of different peoples to Christianity, but this one is, we believe, uniquely Russian. It may be argued that Florensky's statement is excessively coloured by the atmosphere of aestheticism and the general climate of opinion in the early part of this century. And it may be argued that Leskov's characters are too stylized to be anything but artificial. Even if

Photo © The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, Moscow

Virgin Orans *and* St. George slaying the Dragon *(11th to 13th century), a double icon preserved at the church of the Moscow Theological Academy.*

such objections are unfair, the fact that they can be raised means that none of the examples given so far reach to the heart of the matter.

Only the ancient Russian icons, rediscovered by a handful of enthusiasts at the turn of the century and now acknowledged as an important element of the universal heritage, illustrate irrefutably the relationship between beauty and sanctity. The Old Believers described by Leskov were the guardians of a far older tradition, and the icon of the Stroganov school, described with such loving attention, is the product of a style that was in the process of disintegration. In the fifteenth century, on the other hand, this style appears in all its purity. Similarly, Dostoyevsky overheard in the language of the common people the word *blagoobrazie*, and it stands out in the pages of his story as the expression of a profound nostalgia, whereas in Rublev's work and in that of his contemporaries, *blagoobrazie*—the sanctity of beauty, the beauty of sanctity—is at home, is simply in its place.

Using words alone, it would be very hard to prove that the ideal of beauty as sanctity really existed in Russian culture in a clearly delineated, vital and active form. But fortunately the masterpieces of the classical age of Russian icon painting are sufficient evidence for the existence of this ideal. With them, demonstration is no longer required, presentation is sufficient. They are proof in themselves. To paint in such a manner, one must believe with the totality of one's being that beauty is not a matter of aesthetics, but of ontology.

Use of these two philosophical terms is a reminder that until the seventeenth century scholastic philosophy was unknown in Russia. This is why there are no Russian equivalents of such learned works as St. John Damascene's *The Source of Knowledge* in Byzantium, or the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas in the medieval West, which provided a synthesis of the thinking of an entire age. This does not mean, however, that Russia totally lacked a philosophical approach to existence, simply that in Russia philosophizing took another form, that of icon painting. It is not in treatises, but in religious images; not in syllogisms and definitions, but in visible manifestations of beauty—sufficiently austere, rigorous and transparent to permit the passage of the pure light of spiritual significance—that the central ideas of ancient Russian culture must be sought. In other words, the creation of beauty assumed in Russia complementary functions which, in other cultures, were the province of abstract thought.

It is now possible to understand why the style of the Russian icon demands of beauty such a unique austerity, surpassing even the asceticism of Byzantine art and radically different from the poetic atmosphere of Gothic. It is pointless to attempt to compare the highest manifestations of the potential of art on the basis of "better" or "worse". Rublev's *Trinity* is not "better" than the Statue of the Visitation of Reims Cathedral, because nothing could be "better" than it. The opposite is also true. But each of these highly spiritual creations expresses a different form of spirituality. While one, the Virgin of Reims, appeals to the emotions and the imagination, the other appeals to the intellect.

Feeling is one thing; knowledge is another. This is why the spirituality of Gothic statuary is charged with warm-blooded, noble and chivalrous emotion and admiration before the charms of femininity. The Gothic sculptor can permit himself expressions of this kind because he has been relieved of responsibility for demonstrating spiritual verities; there are syllogisms for this purpose. In its austerity, the Russian icon goes further, passing beyond the stage at which emotion reigns into the realm where the spirit alone can be heard. The aim of the Russian master-painter is not to incite, not to disturb, not to play on the emotions, but to show truth itself, absolute and incontestable, and to bear witness to this truth. His duty calls for the greatest possible constraint—instead of an outburst of Gothic enthusiasm, what is required of him is *bezmolvie* (silence, or quietude). In Greek, this quality is denoted by the word *hesychia*, from which the Hesychasts, members of a mystical fourteenth-century Byzantine sect for whom "all human flesh must fall silent....", took their name. Beauty which seeks to authenticate truth cannot but address itself austerely.

Modern Russian culture, anticipated in the critical period of the seventeenth century, born during the age of Peter the Great, renewed during all the storms of Russian history, shares a complex and sometimes dramatic relationship with the ancient heritage of *blagoobrazie*. But it cannot deny its affinity with the millenary tradition. The Russian mind seems to find it difficult to abandon the notion of beauty as a signpost in the quest for truth. The past two centuries have

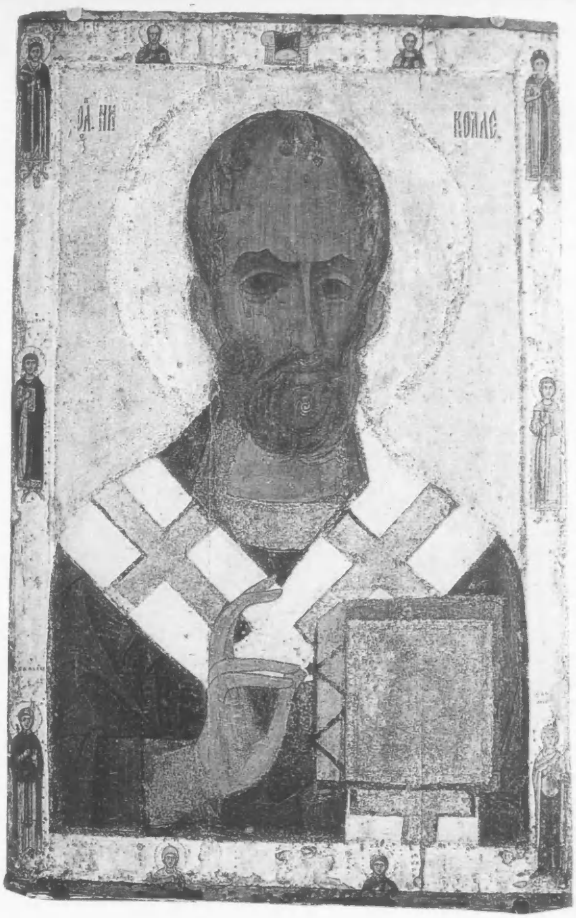

Photo A. Agabalian © Russian edition of the *Unesco Courier*, Progress Publishers, Moscow

Icon depicting St. Nicholas (mid-12th to early 13th century) belonged to Moscow's Novodevichei monastery but may have originated in Novgorod, the city which gave its name to one of the great schools of Russian icon painting (12th to 16th centuries). The main figure and the small surrounding figures of saints seem to have been painted by two different hands. The icon is now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

produced a number of sometimes outstanding Russian philosophers, but it is still questionable whether the authentic Russian philosophy is not to be found elsewhere—in the verses of Pushkin or Tyutchev, for example; in the novels of Dostoyevsky; perhaps in the music of Scriabin. Classical Russian literature is deeply afraid of aesthetic *balovstvo*—frivolous indulgence: Gogol burning manuscripts and Tolstoy endeavouring to repudiate the artist in himself in order to remain simply a pursuer and pedagogue of truth, have few parallels in the history of other literatures. What is unique in Russian life is the attitude to poetry as both a draught of live-giving air and an opportunity of salvation.

If the ancient faith in beauty evoked in *The Russian Primary Chronicle* were to disappear altogether, what would become of us? ■

SERGEI SERGEEVICH AVERINTSEV, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, is a leading Soviet specialist in ancient and medieval cultures and the author of some 100 published works, including monographs on Plutarch and the literature of Antiquity (1973) and on early Byzantine poetics (1977). He is a member of the USSR National Commission for Unesco.

The 'golden ring'

1

Moscow

11

12

9

Rostov

10

8

7

Pereslavl-Zalessky

5

6

Zagorsk

4

2

3

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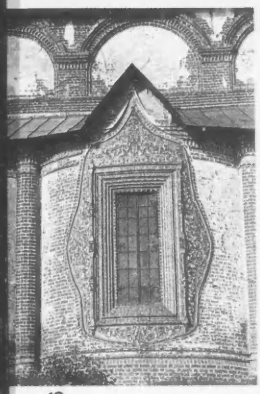
Conception of map and picture story by G. Nikolska, member of the editorial staff of the Russian edition of the *Unesco Courier*, Moscow.



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Yaroslavl

With the fragmentation of Kievan Russia into autonomous principalities in the 12th century, Russian cities experienced an extraordinary flowering of architecture and the arts. In the northeast, the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal became the major political centre after the decline of Kiev. At the end of the 14th century, it was absorbed by its appanage, the principality of Moscow.

Monuments built in the cities of this region between the 12th and the 17th centuries rank among the finest cultural treasures of Old Russia. On a map they form a "golden ring". Photos on this double page show some of the treasures that can be seen on a trip around the ring in clockwise direction, beginning at the walls of the Kremlin (citadel) of Moscow (1).

Kostroma

17

16

Zagorsk developed around the walls of the Trinity and St. Sergius monastery, which was founded in 1340 by St. Sergius of Radonezh and later became a major religious centre. (2) View from the 80-metre-high bell tower; left, the chapel of the well (1644); at rear, the church of the Holy Spirit (1476); right, the Trinity cathedral (c.1422). (3) Religious service in the cathedral, for which Andrei Rublev painted his *Old Testament Trinity*. (4) Cathedral of the Dormition, begun in 1559 during the reign of Ivan the Terrible.

Pereslavl-Zalessky was founded in 1152 by Prince Yuri Dolgoruki, who also founded Moscow. (5) Church of the Presentation (1778), dedicated to Aleksandr Nevsky. (6) Right, cathedral of the Dormition at Goritski monastery, noted for the remarkable quality of its acoustics; left, All Saints church at Danilov monastery (13th century).

Rostov is mentioned in *The Russian Primary Chronicle* in 862. (7) The Kremlin, on the shores of Lake Nero. (8) *St. George slaying the Dragon*. This 15th-century wood sculpture is one of the treasures of the church of St. John the Theologian (9), built above an entrance gate on the periphery of the Kremlin (1683). (10) Centre, bell tower of the cathedral of the Dormition, with its 13-bell carillon.

Yaroslavl, founded in 1010 by Prince Yaroslav the Wise, ranked second only to Moscow in the 17th and 18th centuries. It has a number of magnificently decorated churches. (11) The church of St. Elias (1647-1650) and (12) its famous baroque iconostasis (screen decorated with icon paintings). (13) Window framed with enamelled tiles in the church of St. John Chrysostom, in the Korovniki district. (14) The church of St. John the Baptist, in the suburb of Tolchkovo. (15) The monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour (1506-1516), where the manuscript of the 12th-century *Song of Igor's Campaign* was found.

Kostroma, thought to have been founded in 1152 by Yuri Dolguruki. (16) The Ipatievski monastery, which houses a museum of architecture in wood, is dominated by the cupolas of the mid-17th century cathedral of the Trinity (17).

Suzdal, first capital of the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal, is known to have existed since 1024. (18) In its Kremlin are the cathedral of the Nativity (13th century) and the monastery of the Saviour-Efimievski (14th century). (19) The central area: left, market halls dating from the 19th century.

Vladimir, founded by Vladimir Monomakh in 1108, became the capital of the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal in the mid-12th century. (20) The church of St. Dimitri (1194-1197) and detail (21) of low-reliefs inspired by popular imagery which adorn it. (22) The church of the Intercession of the Virgin (1165) on the river Nerl is a masterpiece of Russian architecture. (23) The cathedral of the Dormition (begun 1158), where Russian princes and metropolitans were enthroned until 1432, contains works by Andrei Rublev, Daniel Cheorny and the school of Master Dionysius.

Suzdal

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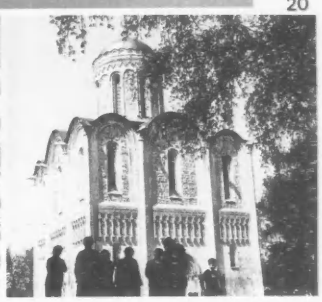
Vladimir

21



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A thousand-year heritage

BY METROPOLITAN JUVENALY

THE conversion of Russia to Christianity, the thousandth anniversary of which is being solemnly celebrated in 1988 by the Russian Orthodox Church, was an event of great historical significance, bringing as it did a major part of the population of eastern Europe into the family of Christian nations.

The first seeds of the faith had, however, begun to sprout from the soil of what was to become the State of Rus' as early as the first century AD, the Age of the Apostles. According to one thesis, St. Andrew, the "first-called", carried out missionary activities in the region. This thesis is confirmed by a tradition related to this saint in the first- to third-century Christian communities of the northern Black Sea coast. Excavations of churches of this period at Chersonesus, Tanais and the ancient city of Aksaiskoe (or Kobyakovoe) have yielded moulds which were used for making communion wafers and which are patterned with the distinctive X-shaped cross of St. Andrew rather than the more familiar upright cross.

During the third and fourth centuries, there were Greek dioceses in a region stretching from the north shore of the Black Sea to the limits of the Slav-dominated regions; the evangelizing influence of the more sophisticated culture and religion that they represented cannot have been lost on the members of the Slav communities. And when, in the sixth century, successive waves of invaders—Huns, Magyars, Bulgars and Avars—displaced the Slav tribes until they occupied virtually the whole of the Balkan peninsula as far as ancient Sparta, the resulting close cohabitation with Christian Greeks must have had a further impact. From this period date the earliest established settlements of Christianized Slavs.

According to the *Lives* of St. George of Amastris and St. Stephen of Surozh, bands of Russian warriors (*druzhinniki*) attacked these two cities in Asia Minor at the end of the eighth century, and were later baptized there. In 864 an entire Slav State, Bulgaria, was converted to Christianity. By the tenth century, it was already possible to speak of the eastern Slavs as comprising both Christians and pagans—a mixture noted by the contemporary Arab writer and traveller, Masudi (c.900-c.956), in his compilation "The Fields of Gold". It seems that at that time Christianity had made greater progress among the southern Slavs, who were closer to the Bulgarians and the Greeks, than among those living further north.

In 957, Princess Olga of Kiev was baptized in Constantinople. She remained a Christian until the end of her life, and strove unremittingly to extend the faith among her compatriots. "May God's will be done," she implored; "may He pardon my people and the land of Russia; and may it be granted to them as it was granted to me—to turn to Him." It was Olga's grandson, Prince Vladimir, who in 988 accepted Christianity on behalf of the Kievan State.

An age of mass evangelization had arrived. Whole countries abandoned paganism and became part of European Christen-

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Photo I. Kostin © APN, Moscow

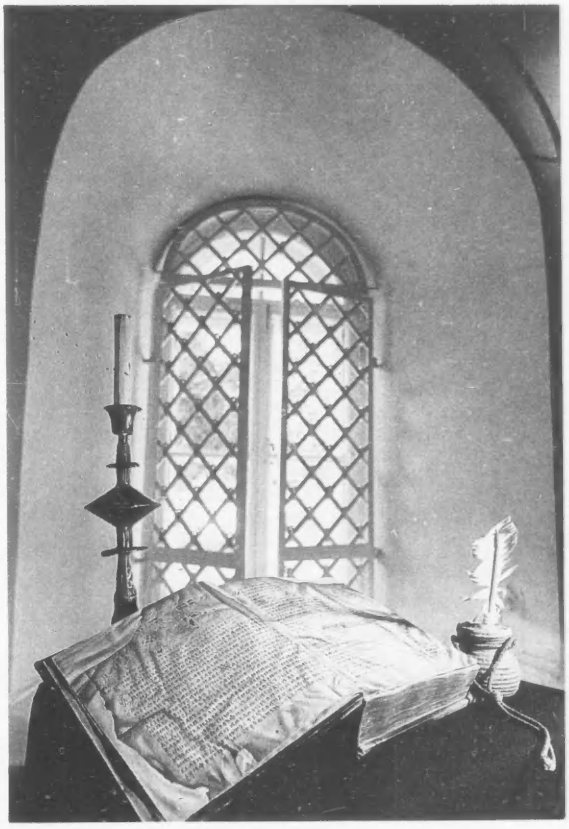

Photo V. Repik and V. Falin © Fotokronica TASS, Moscow

The Pecherskaya lavra (Monastery of the Caves) in Kiev was founded in the 11th century. Its first monks were hermits living in caves dug out of the clay banks along the Dnieper. The Lavra (or important monastic foundation), which soon became the centre of Kievan intellectual life, is an extraordinary architectural ensemble which was built over 9 centuries. One of the monks was the late 11th century chronicler Nestor, the main compiler of **The Russian Primary Chronicle** *which relates the earliest history of Kievan Russia. Above, manuscript of the* **Chronicle**, *preserved in the Lavra's museum of ancient books. Photo left shows (at left) the church of the Trinity (1106-1108), which is built above the main gateway of the Lavra; centre, the ruins of the first, brick-built abbatial church (1077), destroyed in 1941; at right, the great bell tower (1731-1745).*

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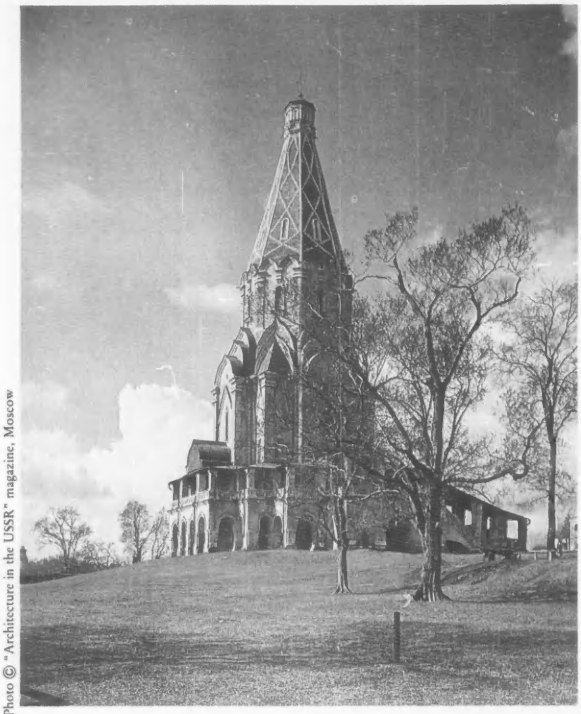

Photo © "Architecture in the USSR" magazine, Moscow

The soaring lines of the church of the Ascension (1532) at Kolomenskoie, southeast of Moscow, call to mind a famous passage in **The Russian Primary Chronicle** *describing the awe felt by the emissaries of Prince Vladimir of Kiev when they saw the majesty of worship at Constantinople: "For surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere upon Earth, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men...."*

dom: Denmark in the tenth century; Iceland and Norway around the year 1000; Sweden during the following century.

The Christianization of Russia is important because the new religion brought a fundamentally new manner of perceiving the world, the organization of society, the power of the State, relations between peoples and their interpretation of morality. There is, after all, total antinomy between Christian and pagan principles of self-awareness. Moreover, a Christianized world is no longer the domain of deities bent on delivering chastisement, to be appeased with sacrifices, but the creation of an infinitely benevolent and all-merciful God. And all people are equal in dignity for in Christianity, as the Apostle Paul wrote (*Epistle to the Galatians*, 3,28): "There is neither Jew nor Greek ... you are all one in Jesus Christ." "Cherish not only your own faith but also that of others", the Russian Church enjoined its followers. Finally, Christian baptism brought with it a number of commandments such as "thou shalt not kill ... thou shalt not steal ... thou shalt not bear false witness ...", which transcended national frontiers and were to be observed by all who shared the same faith.

With the coming of Christianity, the writings of the Church Fathers made their way into western, northern and eastern Europe, together with the literature of Antiquity. Monasteries, churches and schools were founded. Annalists like the Venerable Bede in England, Adam of Bremen in Germany, and Nestor the Chronicler in Russia (considered to be the compiler of the *Povest vremennykh let*, or "Tale of Bygone Years", also known as *The Russian Primary Chronicle*) committed their countries' legends to massive tomes. There began an age of journeys, peregrinations and cultural contacts, later to be described in autobiographical accounts, of which the twelfth-century "Pilgrimage of the Abbot Daniel to the Holy Land" is one outstanding example from early Russian literature.

Christianization brought with it a passion to build. Following his conversion, Prince Vladimir gave orders for the construction of religious edifices in Kiev and elsewhere, launching a large-scale programme which literally laid the foundations of Russian architecture with such world-famous masterpieces as the cathedrals of St. Sophia in Kiev and Novgorod, the cathedral of the Assumption in Vladimir and the *Pecherskaya lavra* (Monastery of the Caves), also in Kiev.

CONTINUED PAGE 23

COLOUR PAGES

The painting of icons, images of sacred figures or events, became an outstanding art form in Christian Russia. In Orthodox churches such images are venerated and have a place in the liturgy through the iconostasis or icon-covered screen (see page 11). The art of the icon is symbolical rather than realistic, and the traditional icon painter was not an artist expressing a personal vision, but a mediator who followed rules prescribed by tradition to make a pictorial expression of Church doctrine. Austere, and usually shunning realistic detail, Russian icon painting is an art of great subtlety and nuance. In old Russian icons the subject is often painted in a recess cut into the wooden panel, and the raised surrounding "frame" thus formed is part of the work. In the 16th century and later the painted figures were sometimes partially covered by an encasement of precious metals and stones (see caption page 3).

Page 19

Above: ***Detail of a Virgin "Hodigitria" ("She who shows the way") from one of the earliest Russian icons, believed by some scholars to date from the early 12th century. The Virgin Hodigitria was a form of depicting the Virgin Mary much used by icon painters. (See also colour photo bottom left, page 22). This icon is currently undergoing restoration at the Kremlin State Museums, Moscow.***

Below: ***In this icon, one of the oldest images of Christ Emmanuel ("God with us" in Hebrew), Christ the Saviour is shown as an adolescent flanked by two archangels. Formerly in the cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, Moscow, the icon is today in the Tretyakov Gallery.***

Photos E. Agabalian © Russian edition of the *Unesco Courier*, Progress publishers, Moscow

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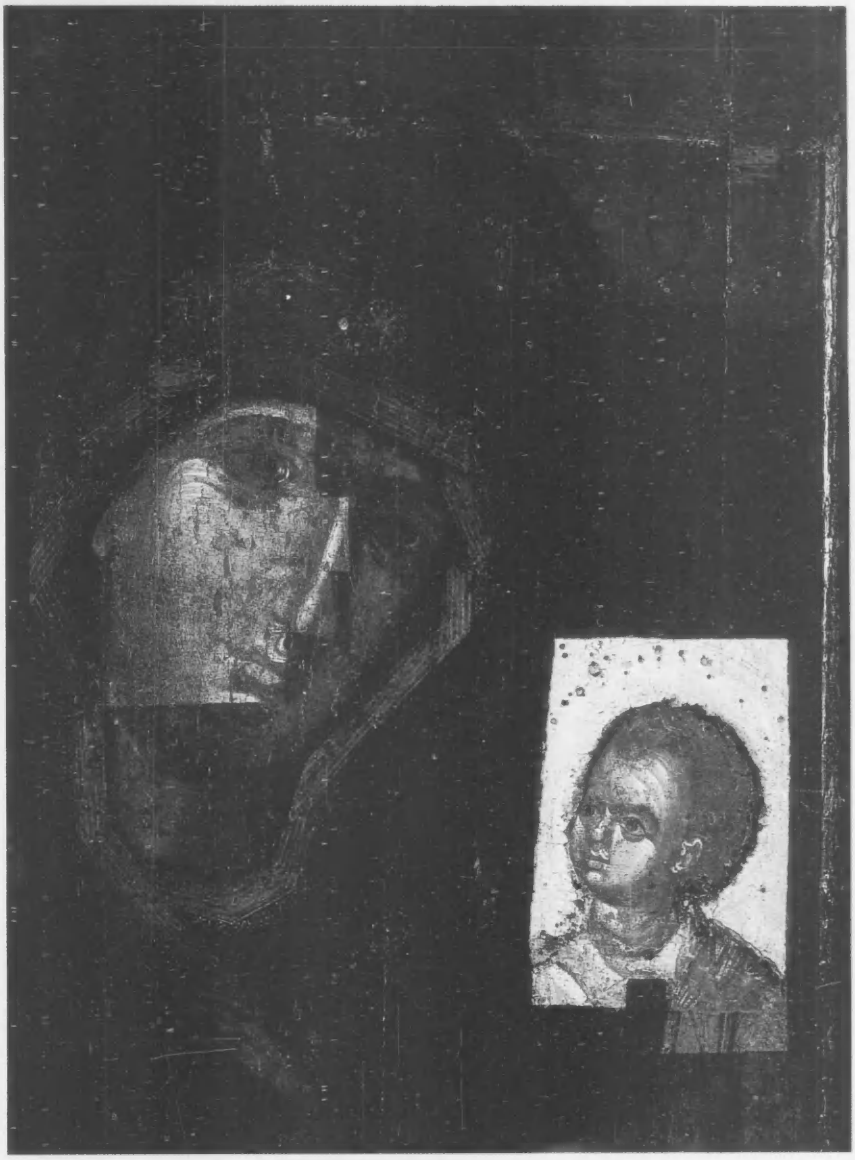
Attributed to Master Dionysius (c.1440-c.1503), the outstanding icon painter of the Moscow School taught by the successors of Andrei Rublev, this **Crucifixion** ***(c. 1500) is one of the most beautiful of all Russian icons. The elongated figures strengthen the vertical rhythm of a work in which golden light symbolizes Christ's victory over death, a feature of the Orthodox conception of the crucifixion. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.***

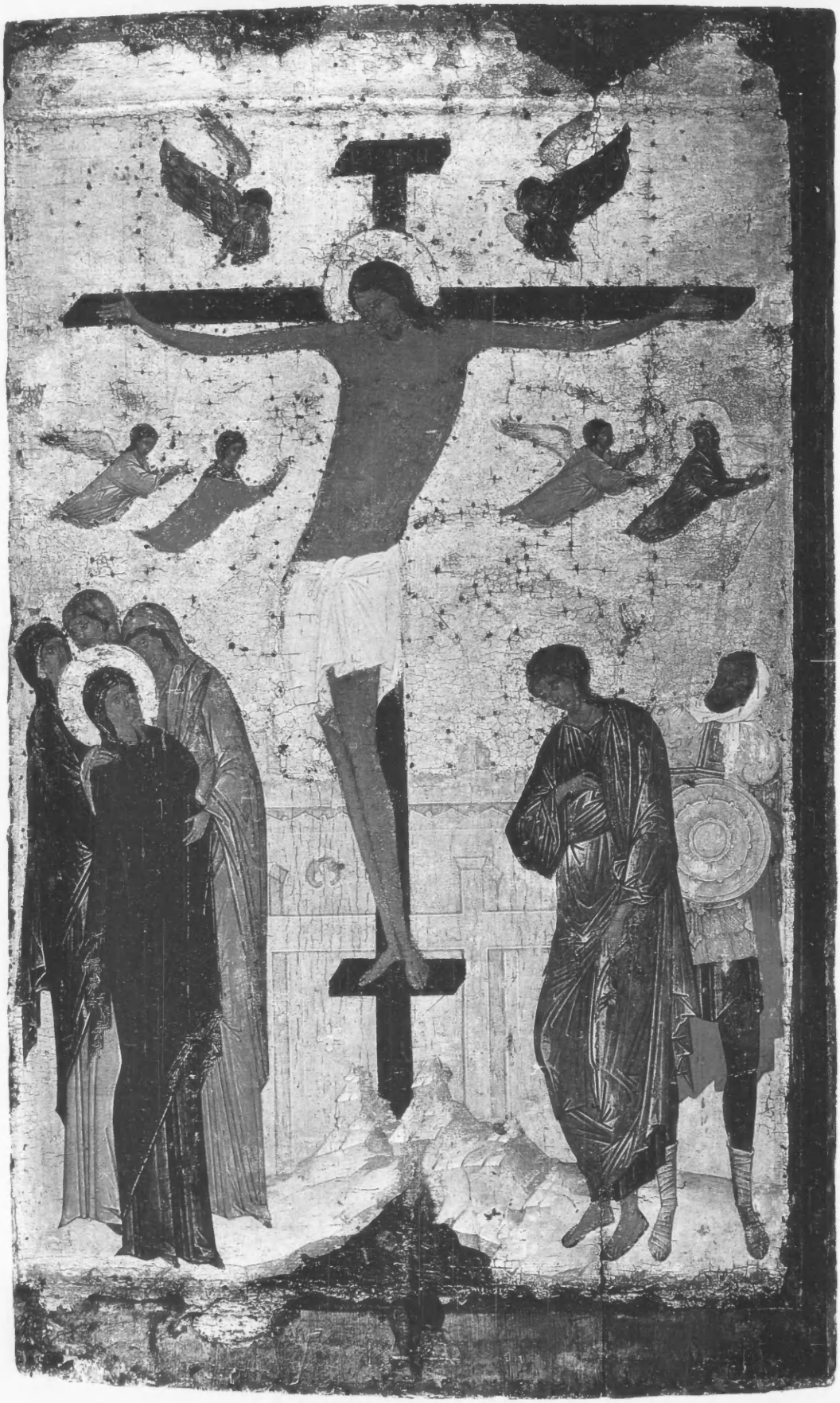
Photo © The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, Moscow

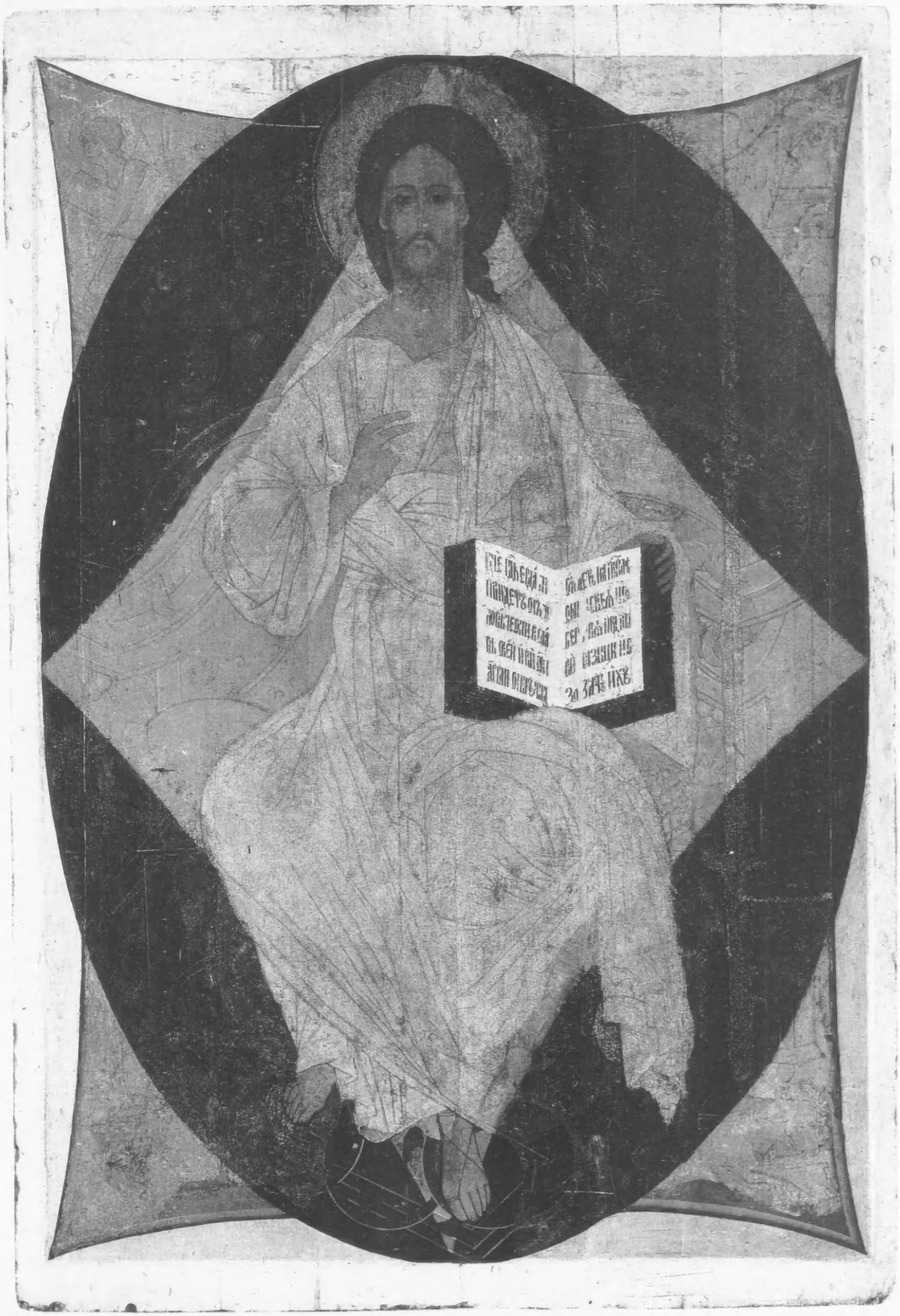
Page 21

The Saviour in Glory ***(early 15th century), painted by Andrei Rublev (c.1370-c.1430) and Daniel Cheorny (c.1360-c.1430) for the cathedral of the Dormition at Vladimir, northeast of Moscow. Enthroned within an oval*** **mandorla** ***(an iconographical symbol signifying Divine Glory), Christ blesses with the right hand, while with the left He supports the open Gospels resting on His knee. In the corners are the symbols of the evangelists. This type of icon evokes the Last Judgment and is inspired by the Books of Ezekiel and the Apocalypse.***

Photo © The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, Moscow







ІС. ХС.

СТАЯ ГНА

COLOUR PAGE

Above: *icon of the Holy Face of Christ. It belongs to an iconographical type known in Russian as* **Nerukotvorny** *("not made with hands"), in reference to a tradition whereby the original icon was a legendary image sent by Christ to King Abgar of Edessa. According to this tradition, the king, afflicted with leprosy, wished to talk with Jesus but Jesus, knowing that His Passion was near, sent the king the image of His face miraculously imprinted on a piece of cloth. Attributed by some specialists to the Novgorod School, the icon shown here once adorned the cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, Moscow (mid-12th century-early 13th century) and is now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.*

Photo E. Agabalian © Russian edition of the *Unesco Courier*, Progress publishers, Moscow

Below: *15th-century icon painted on both sides. Right,* **The Trinity** *and left, a Virgin Hodigitria (see also top photo page 19), in which the Virgin holds the Christ-child on her left arm while she gestures towards Him with her right hand. Jesus holds a scroll of the Scriptures in His left hand and makes a benediction with His right. The Greek monogram of Christ (IC XC) is inscribed above His head. This icon belonged to the cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod.*

Photo A. Riazantsev © Soviet Culture Fund, Moscow

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

The birth of Slav literature, for its part, was a direct product of the evangelistic activities of the missionaries, Saints Cyril and Methodius, who in the ninth century created a new alphabet for the translation of the Gospels and various liturgical works into the language known as Old Slavonic. In the Russian Orthodox Church, the national language now began to be used for religious services and sermons.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries also saw the emergence of a distinguished school of Russian writers, including Hilarion, metropolitan of Kiev; Cyril, bishop of Turov; Daniel the Exile; and Simon, bishop of Vladimir, and the monk Polycarp. At the same time, missionary activity and the creation of new monasteries in outlying regions facilitated further settlement and the extension of Russian territory.

With the thirteenth century, the sky darkened. Storming out of the east, the Mongols hurled themselves against the State of Kiev in 1237. Three years later, the city fell and the Horde of Khan Batu pressed further westwards, laying waste to everything in its path. They were halted essentially because the fierce resistance of the Russian State wore down the Mongol forces.

For 200 years, occupied Russia was under the Mongol yoke. While the countries of western Europe applied their genius to the construction of cathedrals, cities and castles, the creation of magnificent libraries and the foundation of schools and universities, Kievan Rus', its energies sapped by servitude, paid annual tribute to its nomad overlords.

Little by little, however, and thanks notably to the efforts of the Church, a patriotic resistance movement took shape in and around the hitherto obscure city of Moscow. The guiding spirit of the struggle for freedom was the founder (in 1337) and Father Superior of the monastery of the Trinity, St. Sergius of Radonezh, who predicted the hard-won victory over the Mongols on the Plain of Kulikovo in 1380, which marked a turning-point in Russian history and a milestone on the road to liberation. The disciples of St. Sergius travelled to the farthest corners of the land of Russia where, in the most remote and untamed wildernesses, they founded monasteries and hermitages.

Despite the sufferings imposed by the Mongol yoke, the Russian Orthodox Church continued, through the efforts of its most faithful servants, to produce crop after crop of

Influence of religious icons can be seen in works on secular themes by some modern Russian painters. Below, **The Year 1918 at Petrograd,** *painted by Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin (1875-1939) in the dramatic atmosphere of the early days of the Revolution, is a modern treatment of a favourite subject of the old icon painters, the Virgin and Child. Affinities with ancient icons can also be seen in the stylization of the figures and the purity of the colours.*

Photo © Izobrazitelnoe iskusstvo publishers, Moscow

A number of monasteries classified as historical monuments have recently been returned by the Soviet State to the Russian Orthodox Church. One of them is the 13th-century Danilov monastery in Moscow, which is the seat of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. The main ceremonies marking the millennium have taken place in the monastery, Moscow's oldest, which has been meticulously restored. Left, view of the monastery from a bell tower. Right, an old photo of the 16th-century Vvedenski monastery, which was returned to the Church in 1987. The Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky paid two visits to the monastery while working on his novel **The Brothers Karamazov.**

Photos © The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, Moscow

spiritual fruits. This period saw the foundation of religious institutions including the Trinity and St. Sergius monastery (1337), the monasteries of Spass-Andronikov (1360), Simonov (1370), Kirillovo-Belozersky (1397), Solovetsky (1429), and many others. Some monasteries became centres of annal-writing; others incorporated schools and libraries; still others provided workshops where such masterpieces of Orthodox icon painting as the works of Theophanes the Greek and, most notably, the *Old Testament Trinity* of Andrei Rublev were created (see front cover and page 3).

The significance of Russian religious culture during the past thousand years may be measured by its influence on European, Asian and American cultures. At one point or other in its history, this influence has reached out to Finland, Poland, the Volga region, the Caucasus and Transcaucasia, Western Siberia, Yakutia, Kamchatka, the Amur river region, Alaska, the Aleutian islands, North America, Japan, Central Asia, Korea and parts of China. The evangelistic work of the Church over these immense territories brought more than forty different ethnic groups totally or partially into the Christian fold; thanks to the missionaries, many of them acquired their own written language and gained access to translations of the Gospels. Thanks, too, to missionaries of the Russian Orthodox Church, the original religious culture and traditions are alive today in the art, music, architecture and plainsong of Orthodox dioceses in such countries as the United States, Japan and Finland.

The consolidation of Russia as a unified State centred on Moscow may be said to have begun under the influence of Metropolitans Peter (d. 1326) and Aleksei (d. 1378). Russian culture of the Muscovite period may be defined as essentially religious. At the time when western Europe was caught up in the crisis of the Reformation, daily life in Russia was permeated with, and to a great extent determined by, the influence of the Church, which inspired the creation of whole cities that may today be considered as monuments to Russian Orthodoxy: Suzdal, Rostov-Veliky, Pereslavl-Zalessky, Kirillov (see photos pages 14 and 15).

The construction of new monasteries carried Russian architecture to even greater heights; the result may be seen in such splendid edifices as the churches of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe; of St. John the Precursor in the village of Dyakovo; of the Intercession on Red Square in Moscow (the cathedral of St. Basil the Beatified); of Elijah the Prophet at Yaroslavl; of the Resurrection on the Debr at Kostroma; and very many others.

The art of icon painting has given us the names of Dionysius, Prokhor of Gorodets, Daniel Cheorny, Prokop Chirina, Istom Savina, and Simon Ushakov. A Greek deacon, Paul of Aleppo, wrote after a visit to Russia in 1666 that "the icon painters here have their equals nowhere on Earth, such are their artistic skills, the delicacy of their touch and their ease of craftsmanship. ... Sad it is, indeed, that such hands are mortal."

The heritage of Muscovite Russia developed still further during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Familiarization with ancient traditions generated fresh literary and artistic creativity. Nikolai Gogol, Nikolai Leskov, Pavel Melnikov-Pechersky and many others, including Fyodor Dostoyevsky, wrote against the background of Orthodox spirituality. Even the works of those Russian writers of genius, from Pushkin and Tolstoy to Blok, whose attitude to Orthodoxy was more contradictory, are indelibly marked with signs of their Orthodox roots; while the sceptic Ivan Turgenev depicted the piety of the Russian people in his story "Living Relics".

The paintings of Mikhail Nesterov (1862-1942), Mikhail Vrubel (1856-1910) and K.S. Petrov-Vodkin (1875-1939), the sources of whose art lay in Orthodox icon painting, are of very great interest; while the history of music has been immensely enriched by the Russian Orthodox choral tradition and, later, by the work of Bortnyansky, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov.

Russian religious thought has left more than a few traces in European history. During the first half of the present century, Russian philosophy and theology influenced western European culture through the works of such eminent figures as Vladimir Solovev (1853-1900), the priests Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944), Pavel Florensky (1882-1943), Georgy Florovsky (1893-1979) and many others.

Today, the members of the Russian Orthodox Church

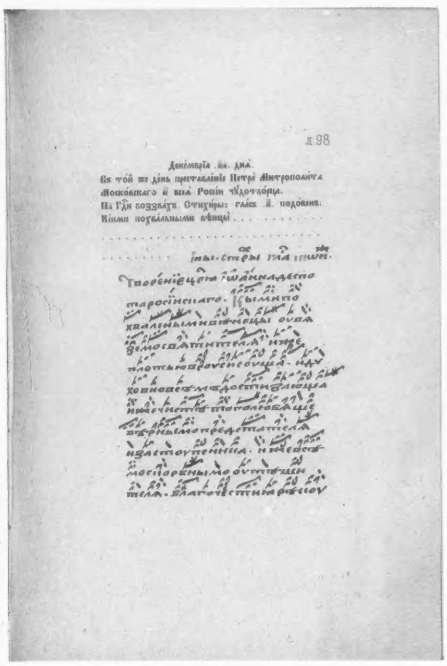


Photo © Lenin Library, Moscow

Inherited from the Byzantine musical tradition, the liturgical chant of the Russian Orthodox Church was originally monophonic (sung by a single voice or by several voices in unison) and executed without instrumental accompaniment. Above, verses of hymns composed by Ivan the Terrible.

number tens of millions. With ten centuries' experience in building a Christian ethic, our Church in the modern world is engaged both in the pursuit of its traditional mission and in the identification of new approaches to its task. Since strongly endorsing and adhering to the international peace movement when it emerged in the late 1940s, it has become a member of many international organizations working for peace, cultural creation and the safeguard of cultural values.

In 1977, for the first time in the history of our country, an international conference was organized on the initiative of the Russian Orthodox Church on the theme of "Clergy for a lasting peace, disarmament and equitable relations between peoples". The conference established guidelines for co-operation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the members of other religions in the struggle for peace. A similar conference was held in 1982.

In 1987, our experience of co-operation in the struggle for peace was widened to include not only the members of other religions but also international public opinion, when our Church took part in an international forum, "For a denuclearized world, for the survival of humanity", which launched an appeal for joint action.

The thousandth anniversary of the Christianization of Russia has shown the great interest in our Church taken by international opinion, and at international meetings held to celebrate this event in Kiev (1986), and Moscow (1987), scholars of worldwide reputation have traced the links between Russian culture and the Orthodox heritage. ■

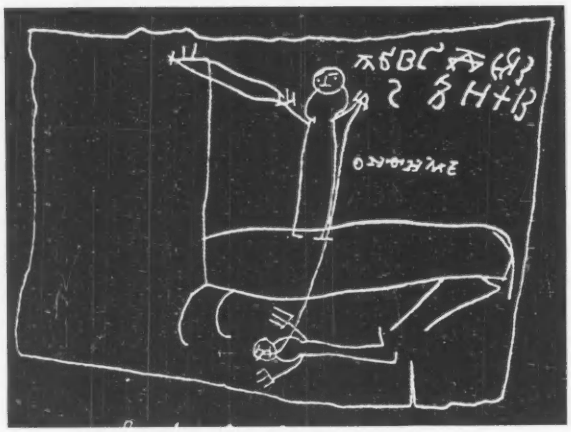
Monsignor JUVENALY, Metropolitan of Krutits and Kolomna, is a leading figure in the Russian Orthodox Church and a member of its Holy Synod. He is a member of the USSR National Commission for Unesco and an active participant in the work of many Soviet organizations and institutions concerned with cultural affairs, international co-operation and peace.

Everyday life and letters in ancient Russia

BY MIKHAIL J. BRAICHEVSKY

Photos © APN, Paris

Birch bark manuscripts discovered at the city of Novgorod since 1951 have provided a host of fascinating details about life in medieval Russia. Above, fragment of a letter dating from the late 14th century. Signed drawing, below, was made in the early 13th century by a schoolboy named Onfim. It shows Onfim astride a charger with an enemy dead at his feet.



IN ancient Rus', birch bark played a similar role to that of papyrus in ancient Egypt and wax tablets in Rome. Although feudal deeds, which were meant to be preserved indefinitely, were written on parchment, birch bark was used for writing of a more everyday kind, such as instructions about farm or household matters, acknowledgments of debt, memoranda, and private correspondence. In 1951, archaeologists working in the ancient Russian city of Novgorod unearthed several score of these texts, the oldest dating from the late eleventh century. The importance of this remarkable find for the history of language and culture is comparable to that of papyri for classical studies.

The writers and recipients of the birch bark missives were people of various degrees of eminence and from different sectors of society. They included boyars, patricians, ordinary artisans, peasants and soldiers. Hundreds of such writings have been found. Nearly all deal with everyday matters, reflecting the humdrum side of life which in most historical sources is overshadowed by events of national importance. Such material is a mine of information about the extent of literacy in Rus' and about the existence of a well-established primary education system there. Schoolchildren even had "exercise-books", as we know from the discovery of those that once belonged to a little boy called Onfim, who lived in Novgorod in the first half of the thirteenth century.

Thus it is not surprising that many inscriptions should have been found on instruments used by the master craftsmen of ancient Rus'. A jeweller's matrix unearthed in Kiev is inscribed with the name of its owner, "Makosimov". Arabic inscriptions on matrices discovered in the Podol district of Kiev provide valuable evidence about the international composition of the patrician class in Kiev. The inscription on an amphora found in Kiev reads "Mstislavl's amphora", indicating its owner. A fragment of another amphora is inscribed with the word "good"—probably part of a formula expressing good wishes. Another inscription, which reads "May this amphora be well filled!", is quite unambiguous.

Specialists are still arguing about the meaning of the inscription on the best-known amphora, which was discovered in a

Photo © Mistetsvo publishers, Kiev

Two horsemen slaying a warrior are shown on this low-relief carving (late 12th century). Now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, the relief originally came from the cathedral of St. Michael with the Golden Roof, Kiev. Built between 1108 and 1113, the cathedral is renowned for its mosaics and frescoes, some of which are thought to be the work of a great Russian icon painter, Alimpi of Kiev.

graveyard at Gnezdovsk near Smolensk. Some read it as *Goroukhshcha* (mustard), others as *Goroushna* (gaseous mixture), while yet another school has suggested the curious reading *Goroukh psa* (Goroukh wrote this). This find is particularly interesting because it dates from the first half of the tenth century, before Prince Vladimir's baptism. We know that writing existed in Rus' long before 988 from treaties concluded between Rus' and the Greeks, from the "Life of Cyril the Philosopher", and from information recorded by writers from the East. But on the amphora from Gnezdovsk we have a "real-life" autograph written before the time of Vladimir.

A tenth-century writer named Chernorizets Khrabr, who wrote a treatise on the rise of Slav literacy, suggested that writing developed in the following stages: "first, our ancestors used 'marks' and 'cuts' when they wanted to transmit information, then they used characters from the Greek alphabet 'without adaptation', and finally Cyril invented a specifically Slav alphabet."

An alphabet recently discovered on the wall of the chapel of St. Mikhail, in the cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev, shows the first stage of the "adaptation" of the Greek alphabet to the phonetic characteristics of Slav languages. In addition to the Greek letters, it contains four characters indicating the Slav sounds "B", "Zh", "Sh" and "Shch", for which symbols had to be found.

In any society, the introduction and spread of literacy is accompanied by revolutionary changes in all spheres of social life. With the coming of literacy, information becomes autonomous and acquires almost unlimited possibilities for transmission in space and time. It can be said that the extraordinary development of culture in ancient Rus' before the Mongol invasion was largely due to this circulation of information within society.

If we consider culture as a system, we can see that it is really a whole, and that the factors that determine its development influence (albeit in different ways) all spheres of creative activity, from science and agriculture to poetry, metallurgy, clothing and architecture. The latter calls for special attention.

Photo © Nauka publishers, Moscow

Enamelled medallion dating from the early 13th century. Around the image of Christ are the words "I am the light".

Photos © Nauka publishers, Moscow

Miniature from the "Chronicle of Radziwill", a late 15th-century illustrated manuscript (see also caption page 6). The scene, set in the Christianized Russia of 1092, shows the people of Polotsk barricaded inside their homes to escape the "naves", or spirits of the dead, whose appearance in Polotsk, according to the Chronicle, was a portent of great misfortune throughout the country.

Photo © Nauka publishers, Moscow

These anthropomorphic laundry beaters from Kievan Russia are decorated with Sun and Earth symbols. Each head has the form of the Sun, the cross-pieces are shaped like outstretched arms, and the base is a wide skirt carved with Suns and zig-zag lines representing water.

What traces of the architecture of ancient Rus' have survived and what have archaeologists learned from them?

The social structure of medieval society was such that there were three broad categories of dwelling—palaces, castles and houses. Each was designed to provide for a certain standard of living, a certain way of life, certain ideas about behaviour, and about real needs and the means of meeting them. In a private house, for instance, there was no need for a servants' refectory, but a refectory was necessary in a castle. Nor did a private house require a throne room, which was an important part of a palace.

It was long thought that most of the people of Kievan Rus' lived in dug-outs with sides 3 or 4 metres long. Each dug-out was spanned by a roof resting on the ground. Towns were depicted as a strange mixture of magnificent temples, luxurious palaces and wretched hovels in the ground.

Researchers were not perturbed by the obvious discrepancy between this combination and the general cultural level at that time. It did not occur to them that people who had composed—or at least who read—the "Tale of Bygone Years" (*The Russian Primary Chronicle*) and *The Song of Igor's Campaign* could not possibly have lived in burrows, or that women dressed in silk, velvet and brocade, and wearing attached to their head-dresses the ornaments and pendants that are displayed in Russian museums today could not have crawled out of dug-outs on hands and knees.

It is true that in Rus', as in all feudal societies, the social classes were divided by great inequalities of wealth. But at the same time there was a limit beyond which society could not go without sinking into degradation and decay. Archaeology has produced convincing evidence in this field.

Stone palaces in Kievan Rus', for example, were few in number, but we know that they existed in many large towns—in Kiev, Chernigov, Pereyaslavl, Bogolyubovo, near Vladimir-on-Klyazma, and others.

Exhaustive studies have been carried out on the castles and the many fortified urban centres that made Rus' so picturesque in the ninth and tenth centuries. Unfortunately, misunderstandings have occurred, because evidence has often been misinterpreted. The tenth-century fortified centre of the village of Gorodishche, near Shepetovka, is a good example of such a misunderstanding. Excavations were carried out in the village for several seasons, but the archaeologist, who was

Photo © Nauka publishers, Moscow

Fragments of a finely crafted gold and silver distaff (viewed from both sides), from 12th-century Kiev. The wheel bears the inscription "distaff charm", evoking magical practices.

Symbolic charms and ornaments (below) seem to have been popular in Kievan Russia. Bird-shaped amulets (top row) may have been intended to bring good fortune in marriage. Centre row, duck/horse trinkets incorporating solar symbolism. Ornamental spoons (bottom row) were a token of abundance.

Photo © Nauka publishers, Moscow

searching for a specific "feudal manor", did not suspect that the whole complex, consisting of dozens of dwellings, farm buildings, tradesmen's premises and warehouses, was what he was actually looking for.

But the type of building which has stimulated the greatest controversy is the ordinary dwelling, about which the most extraordinary ideas have been advanced. We now know that a peasant's dwelling at that time was like the later Ukrainian *khata* or the Great Russian *izba*. In the towns, most of the buildings were log houses or frame buildings, modified and adapted to the conditions of urban life. The frame buildings were constructed according to the standard *Fachwerk* (half-timber) technique which was widely used throughout medieval Europe, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caspian Sea.

Both these types of building had several floors, usually three, it would seem, since buildings are generally shown in ancient Russian miniatures with three floors (though some have two or four). The "dug-outs" were simply part of the lower floor that was set into the ground, for reasons of fire prevention and general domestic purposes. The log houses that have been found, especially in the Podol district of Kiev, may have consisted of semi-basements surmounted by a *Fachwerk* superstructure. Such structures have been found in Zvenigorod, with grooves to strengthen the *Fachwerk* structure at the level of the uppermost logs.

Much has been written about ancient Russian culture. An enormous amount of fresh information has been obtained from the latest discoveries made by archaeologists, but there is still a long way to go before we fully understand this complex phenomenon. One thing is certain—that the culture of Rus' at the time when it adopted Christianity was in no way inferior to that of neighbouring peoples; and the introduction of Christianity, which linked Rus' with a different cultural tradition, merely encouraged the flowering of the lofty humanism which was inherent in the culture of ancient Rus'. ■

MIKHAIL JULIANOVICH BRAICHEVSKY, Soviet specialist in the history and archaeology of the Slav peoples of Russia, is a senior scientist with the Institute of Archaeology of the Ukrainian SSR Academy of Sciences. He is the author of over 300 publications, including "When and How Kiev was Born" and "The Roots of the Ancient Slav State". Many of his works have been translated.

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BYRON

the rebel

BY MARK STOREY

Photo © Roger-Viollet, Paris. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Painting by Adeline Oppenheim, presented at the Paris Salon of 1902, depicts an episode from Byron's poem The Corsair, *first published in 1814. Medora swoons as she learns from the shipmates of the pirate Conrad, her lover, that he has fallen into the hands of the Pasha Seyd.*

THE English poet George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824) said that he had been "born for opposition". In spite of his tendency to dramatize himself, to strike an attitude, he could be remarkably clear-sighted about himself, and this phrase sums up the central aspect of his life and his work. He rebels against the norms of society and of the literary culture of his age: his targets, he says, are "cant political, cant poetical, and cant moral", and he refuses to separate them in any cosy fashion.

For Byron, politics, morality and poetry are inextricably intertwined; by extension, there is a crucial connection between what he writes and how he lives. His recognition of this makes him that much more effective and compelling as a rebel. When he died at Missolonghi in 1824, before he had seen any action in the Greek War of Independence for which he had gone to fight, he quickly came to be viewed as a martyr for the cause, a central figure around whom the freedom fighters—and their European allies—could rally, and eventually throw off the Ottoman yoke. It was an appropriate conclusion to a relatively brief life, in which the poet repeatedly insisted on the superiority of actions to words. "Born for opposition", he died for it too.

Byron's life was tumultuous, and he has become the figure for a certain type of Romantic writer. But we need to see how the living and the writing go together. If Byron saw himself as in some way cursed from the beginning, he could find physical justification for this belief in the deformed foot with which he was born, and psychological justification in a miserable childhood spent with his Calvinist mother in Aberdeen.

When he inherited his uncle's estate at Newstead Abbey, near Nottingham, in 1798, he began to believe that, as a member of the Regency aristocracy, he could be "well avenged" for the cruelties of his birth. He would assert himself against the odds. He

Photo © Roger-Viollet, Paris. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

And, like a wither'd lily, on the land
His slender frame and pallid aspect lay,
As fair a thing as e'er was formed of clay.

A scene from Byron's "Epic Satire" **Don Juan** *is depicted in this painting by the English artist Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893). After being shipwrecked on the way from Cadiz to Leghorn, Don Juan is cast away on a Greek island where he is found, apparently lifeless, by the beautiful Haidée and her attendant.*

became obsessed with physical fitness, and was to brag, when he swam the Hellespont in 1810, that it was the one great achievement of his life. Freed from the shackles of poverty, he launched on an amorous career that seemed, at every stage, to flout convention. He formed attachments as though they were challenges, taking on, with increasing risk, the women of high society who seemed only too ready to respond to the challenge.

For Byron, the price of his wholesale sexual rebellion was to be exile: he left England for Italy in April 1816, never to return. But he soon discovered that the amorous delights of Venice provided ample compensation. It was not until he became the official companion (*cavaliere servente*) of Countess Teresa Guccioli that he appeared ready to settle down; and even then he broke all the rules, wrecking the Countess' marriage in the single-minded pursuit of his passion.

It would be wrong to see all this activity as mere self-indulgence. Byron's emotional

restlessness reflected two things: his commitment to personal freedom, and his belief that things did not, could not, remain static.

In 1810 he went on the Grand Tour of Europe, in the course of which he began the poem that was to bring him fame two years later, *Childe Harolde's Pilgrimage*. It is very much an autobiographical poem, with the hero's restless depravity and self-imposed exile a mirror of Byron's own psychology. But it is also an astute and angry response to the state of Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Byron could not share in the generally held English reaction against all the original ideals of the French Revolution. For him, Napoleon was still a hero; the episode of the Elgin Marbles (still reverberating today) was for him an indication of England's perfidy. He recognized the importance of the Greek ideal as represented by the ruined, classical past, and by the stirrings towards Greek Independence that were to find their fulfilment twelve years later. In writing ostensibly about himself, Byron was in fact producing a highly political and provocative poem, championing the cause of freedom throughout Europe.

Typically, his maiden speech in the House of Lords in 1812 was against the tyranny of a government that wanted the death penalty for frame breaking,[1] against what he saw as the "palpable injustice" of the bill. But he soon saw that his rebelliousness would not suit him for Parliament: he did not belong in that system, either. His fight against political hypocrisy, however, was to bring him into active involvement with the attempts of the secret revolutionary society of the Carbonari to free Italy from the Austrians in the 1820s, and then, of course, the final act—much more than a gesture—on behalf of the Greeks.

All this time, he was writing poetry of an extraordinary range and diversity. Even the works that won him popular acclaim, the so-called Turkish Tales, did not exactly fit comfortably into a literary tradition. Byron was focusing all his attention and energies on characters with whom he could sympathize, mysterious adventurers with guilty secrets, set apart from society, and driven by some all-consuming fury that elevates them into potentially tragic heroes. These lonely figures can be compared to the rebellious Prometheus, about whom Byron writes on several occasions. The image of the rebel god who brought fire to mankind, and was punished for it, is an apt reflection of the rebel poet.

With a few exceptions, Byron had little use for his contemporaries. His first satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, was an attack on most living authors. *The Vision of Judgment* was a brilliant and scurrilous attack on the poet laureate Robert Southey, who had written a poem of the same name celebrating the imagined arrival of King George III in Heaven. This combination of poetical and political anger was to inform Byron's largest, most ambitious work, *Don Juan*, in which he attacks the literary giants of his own day, the decline of moral integrity, and the glorification of war on which the concept of Empire depends. It is all the more remarkable for being comic. Rebellious in everything, Byron's final act of literary rebellion is to produce an intensely humane poem that is a radical critique of his society, in a form that challenges the very premises of other writers of his time. By his determined opposition to cant, hypocrisy and humbug, Byron ensured that his name would survive, along with his work, as a byword for truth and liberty. ■

1. In the early 19th century, great distress was caused in parts of England by the introduction of new textile machinery ("frames") which led to the dismissal of many handicraftsmen as well as the impoverishment, owing to increased competition, of others who did not actually lose their employment. In response to the destruction of frames by organized bands, the government introduced severe repressive legislation. Byron's speech in the House of Lords was a notable feature of opposition to this legislation. *Editor*

MARK STOREY is Reader in English literature at the University of Birmingham, England. He has written and edited several books, including *The Letters of John Clare* (Oxford University Press, 1985), and *Byron and the Eye of Appetite* (Macmillan, 1986). His *Poetry and Ireland since 1800* will be published later this year.

In 1823, Byron decided to join the Greeks in their rebellion against Ottoman rule, a struggle which ended in the establishment of an independent kingdom of Greece. The poet did not live to see the end of the War of Independence. After a brief illness he died in the Greek town of Missolonghi on 25 April 1824. Missolonghi later heroically withstood a long siege (below) before falling to the forces of Ibrahim Pasha in April 1826.

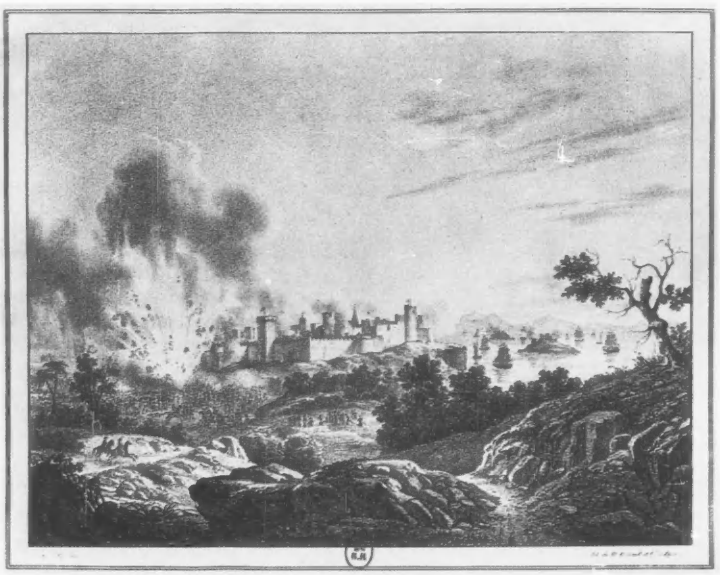


Photo © Roger-Viollet, Paris

René CHAR

A tribute

BY EDOUARD GLISSANT

WHEN poets die, some part of the illumination of the world dies with them; yet the reverberations of their works open up new horizons. Aloof from the fads and ephemeral triumphs of daily life, they bear witness to and, more often than not, are the dynamic source of those deeper currents that shape the course of the world.

René Char fashioned his writings from the French language with the silent concentration of a turner working at his lathe, inventing a form of expression which lies somewhere between that of the pastoral poem and the maxim. The phraseology is familiar and the formulation is enigmatic yet evocative; and this draws him close to the very source of the wisdom of the people, to the world of writings based on popular oral traditions in which the poet works the raw material of words with the same simplicity as a potter works his clay. Poetry of this kind thus stands at the interface of the spoken and the written word, even if it owes its permanence to the written dimension. To it could be applied the words that the poet Jean Grosjean used about the Gospels when he declared that "... they are manifestly spoken yet deliberately written".

This strange marriage of a diamond-hard economy of writing and the comfortingly familiar grace of the voice is paralleled by the rapprochement that René Char made between justice and beauty. A militant who fought against the forces of darkness, he never resorted to simplistic anathematizing. In one of his finest and most profound books of poetry, *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, written at the time (1943-1944) that he was leading a resistance group in the Vaucluse against the Nazi occupying forces, he wrote: "We invite Liberty to sit down with us at all the meals we share. The seat remains empty but a place is always laid for her."

The source of the consistent quality of happiness and well-being that is to be found in René Char's writings is undoubtedly his passionate attachment to the Vaucluse, a region from which he never strayed. In this land of burning light, which gave him his love of painting and of certain artists such as Braque, Miró, Lam and Vieira da Silva, of intense silence, whose muffled echo can be heard in the aphorisms and philosophical notes of his *Recherche de la base et du sommet*, (1941-1965; "Search for the Base and the Summit"), of the benison of sunlit waters and the mute stirrings of olive trees, in this very special land René Char put down the roots of that unquenchable desire to create, to love, to go ever further, that makes him the contemporary of each and every inhabitant of this planet. ■

Photo © Lutfi Gzkök

The French poet René Char (1907-1988)

"Et qui sait voir la terre aboutir à des fruits,
Point ne l'émeut l'échec quoiqu'il ait tout perdu."

(And he who has seen the earth come to fruition
Will never know defeat though all be lost.)

René Char

Photo © Roger Canessa, Toulon

César VALLEJO

A revolutionary voice in modern poetry

BY LEYLA BARTET

IT is no exaggeration to say that contemporary Spanish-American poetry would not be what it is today without César Vallejo. Yet his work, which marked a radical break with traditional forms and subject-matter, took shape in a society whose reaction to it was one of indifference, if not perplexity and hostility.

Vallejo was born in 1892 in the village of Santiago de Chuco, in the Andes of northern Peru, and his poetry was deeply marked by his ties with that cultural background. Forty-six years later—already half a century ago—he died in Paris one rainy afternoon in April 1938, as he had unwittingly prophesied in one of his poems, when he wrote: "I shall die in Paris on a rainy day/a day I can already remember".

There are two main periods in Vallejo's work, both marked by the environment in which he lived. The first of these, which he spent in Peru, saw the beginning of what was to become a constant factor—a rejection of intellectual coteries and stereotypes, of the uncritical adoption of literary models, and of identification with any particular school. With his first two collections of poems, *Los heraldos negros* (1918; "The Black Heralds") and *Trilce* (1922), Vallejo began to use a language which broke away from Romanticism and the mannerisms of Modernism, from the Decadent Movement, and from the dream-inspired symbolism that were typical of Peruvian poetry of the time. The distinctive aesthetic quality of *Los heraldos negros* upset the critics, while *Trilce*, whose very title is a mystery and may be a combination of "triste" (sad) and "dulce" (sweet), violated all the prevailing literary canons. At the time, Luis Alberto Sánchez, a leading Peruvian intellectual, wrote: "César Vallejo has come out with an incomprehensible and extremely strange book . . . and my astonishment increases with every page".

The Peruvian poet César Vallejo photographed at Versailles in 1929

There can be no doubt that this was writing of a kind that the Latin American continent had never seen before. In it intimist cameos fuse with social preoccupations, and contradictory ideas and emotions are coupled (faith and scepticism, hatred and love, life and death):

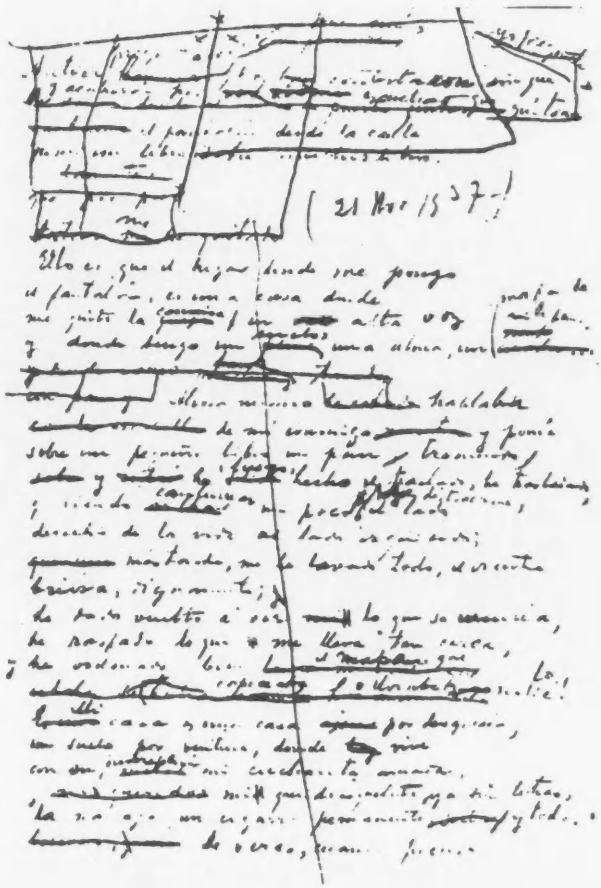
All my bones are alien to me;
perhaps I stole them!
I somehow came to take something
that was meant for someone else;
and I think that had I not been born,
some other poor soul would be drinking
this coffee!
I am not much of a thief ... what will
become of me?
[Los heraldos negros]

Later, the Martiniquais poet Aimé Césaire rightly noted that *Trilce* had dynamited the language in its bid to achieve expression, defined the problems of modernity, and settled scores with the existing Modernist aesthetic.

Vallejo was very quick to grasp the need for social commitment, which he saw in terms not so much of political militancy or the adoption of a hard and fast partisan political stance as of making a choice at a given historical moment. In his student days in the city of Trujillo in northern Peru, he became involved with a group of intellectuals who were connected with what was later to become the APRA Party (*Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*). Indeed, as a result of being unjustly accused of involvement in a local uprising, he had to go into a long period of hiding, following which he was arrested and imprisoned for four months.

Pen and ink drawing of Vallejo made by Pablo Picasso in 1938, shortly after Vallejo's death

Photos © SPADEM 1988, Paris



Manuscript, dated 21 November 1937, of a poem from Vallejo's volume entitled **Poemas humanos**

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In 1923 he moved to France, and lived in Paris until his death fifteen years later. While he was there, he took a keen interest in the problems of his time. He was passionately enthusiastic about the Russian Revolution and in 1932 published *Rusia en 1931* ("Russia in 1931"), a short book describing what he had learned from a visit to that country. He was greatly distressed by the Spanish Civil War in 1936. He was particularly concerned with the role of the intellectual in modern society and was scathing in his criticism of the European avant-garde. In *El art y la revolución* ("Art and Revolution"), he wrote: "Literary schools come and go. Such is the fate of any form of anxiety which, instead of becoming an austere creative laboratory, merely turns into an empty formula".

Vallejo later became involved with anti-fascist groups and in 1937 went to war-torn Spain to attend a congress of intellectuals in support of the Republic.

During his time in Europe, he wrote many prose works and analytical essays, but it was only after his death that the poetry he wrote during this period came to be known, with the publication in 1939 of *Poemas humanos* ("Human Poems") and *España, aparta de mi este cáliz* ("Spain, take away this cup from me"). These books reveal significant changes in Vallejo's style. Although some of the features present in *Trilce* are still to be found, there is a growing preoccupation with rhythmic patterns and with the overall structure of the poems, so that the reader never feels that the writing is disjointed. Vallejo was now making more systematic use of such devices as enumeration and anaphora, or repetition.

Neither pebble, nor oven nor white dog
Defenceless Malaga, where my death was born
While taking a stroll
And where it died of passion without being born....
Malaga, following in your footsteps, with no way out.
[España, aparta de mi este cáliz]

Vallejo was a poet of universal and prophetic significance. This explains both why his work continues to be so relevant and why his poetic diction is so surprisingly modern. It also accounts both for the failure of his contemporaries to understand him, and for the heart-rending emotion he felt as a creative artist. This was undoubtedly the price he had to pay for being one of the greatest poets who has ever written in Spanish. ■

LEYLA BARTET, Peruvian journalist and sociologist, studied linguistics at the University of Paris. She has published a number of articles on ideology and communications, and has co-authored books on advertising and the press.

THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

Reflections on the abolition of slavery in Brazil

BY OSWALDO DE CAMARGO

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THE abolition of slavery in Brazil, which was enshrined in the *Lei Aurea* ("Golden Law") of 13 May 1888, was the outcome of a long struggle punctuated by defeats as well as victories. The decree that became law on that Sunday in May was couched in simple, unembroidered language:

"Article 1: With effect from the date of the present law, slavery is declared to be abolished in Brazil.

Article 2: All provisions to the contrary are hereby repealed.

(Signed) Isabel, Imperial Princess Regent."

In spite of the brevity and terseness of its language, this document, which had actually been drafted six days before, on 7 May 1888, revealed the extent to which the struggle against slavery in Brazil had intensified.

It was the culmination of a long story in which African slaves—black Brazilians—were treated as chattels. Their fate was decided as if they were pawns in a game of chance.

The black slaves who, according to "official" records, were present in Brazil from as early as 1550, became a key element in the country's development. "Without the Blacks, Brazil would not exist," claimed the Portuguese historian Oliveira Martins. There would have been no sugar or coffee or tobacco, and stock-raising and mining would not have been developed. None of the wealth that fuelled Brazilian prosperity in the late nineteenth century would have been generated. It is easy to grasp the importance of the interests that opposed the emancipation of the slaves.

It can be argued that the Brazilian economy would have collapsed without the black slaves. Hence, before the long process of liberation could begin, the circumstances that had prompted the European countries to impose slavery in the Americas had to change.

After abolishing the slave trade, Britain began to exert pressure on other nations to follow suit so that the products of her colonies would continue to be competitive. Brazil came under this pressure after achieving independence in 1822, and probably as a result of it Emperor Pedro I signed a convention in November 1826 (ratified the following year) whereby "any trade in slaves conducted in the three years subsequent to this date shall be deemed to constitute piracy".

The Emperor had spoken, but how much weight did his wishes have compared with those of the powerful interests involved in the Brazilian slave trade? This was only the beginning of a long and gradual process during which many decrees were promulgated, some of them tinged with bitter irony, such as the law in respect of "sixty-year-olds", which freed Blacks who had reached sixty years of age.

After the slave trade had been officially abolished in 1850 under the law sponsored by Euzébio de Queirós and as a result of the vigorous steps taken by the authorities, no more "ships laden with ebony" would ever again set sail from Africa for Brazil. And, some thirty-eight years later, Princess Isabel would sign the celebrated *Aurea* law.

What is a slave but an empty shell, utterly devoid of speech? "Servus non habet personam"—slaves have no personality; they have no bodies, no past, no names, no property. For white people, slaves, as bodies without the attributes of personality, were by definition the incarnation of a social void.

Indeed, the most harrowing and dramatic consequence of slavery in Brazil was the slaves' loss of their identity. And it is that identity which black Brazilians have been seeking since the beginning of the century through paths that have been fraught with difficulty.

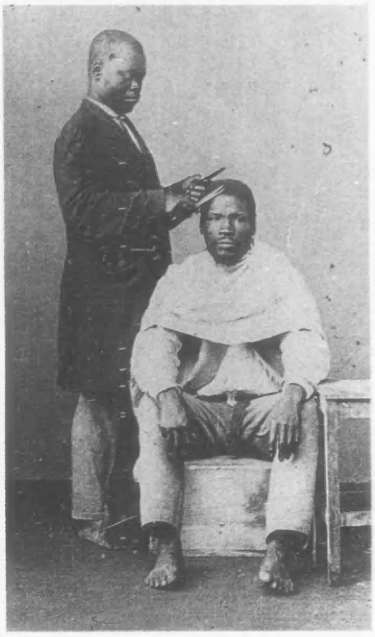
White Brazilians were among the first to praise the abolition of slavery. One of them was Luís Murat, whose "Redemption Hymn" was set to music by Abdom Milanez:

How fortunate you are, my native land.
Your explorers see you emerge as beautiful as the dawn.
Tell the slaves that masters no longer exist
and that now they are free the world over.

These 4 photos of black slaves in Rio de Janeiro were taken before 1870 by a Rio photographer, José Christiano de Freitas Henriques Junior. They belong to a series of portraits originally used as postcards showing "a substantial part of the population of Rio de Janeiro, over half of whom are Blacks or mulattos, slaves or free". Top of page: proclamation issued in 1862, offering a reward for the capture of a fugitive black slave.

Photos taken from *Escravos brasilieros do século XIX na fotografia de Christiano Jr.*, Ex Libris publishers, São Paulo

grâtificacão.



One day, in the midst of applause and bouquets of roses,
They suddenly cast me out from the prison where I lay
Into a more spacious prison.
The freedom they granted me
Proved to be a Trojan horse.
There were snakes lying in wait
Under the cloak of enthusiasm.

Earlier, the poet Solano Trindade (1908-1974), from Pernambuco, in his *Cantares ão meu povo* (1961; "Songs for My People") had written:

I sing the praises of Palmares,
Without envying Virgil or Homer
Or Camoens,
Because my song
Is the cry of a race
In the thick of its struggle
For freedom.

However, this is not the tone adopted by most black Brazilians when they think about 13 May. The literature produced by Afro-Brazilians to advance the arguments propounded in the nineteenth century by the mulatto Luiz Gama and by the Black João da Cruz e Sousa is a magnificent demonstration of their desire to achieve self-awareness and, above all, to act as black people.

While white people such as Luís Murat could sing the praises of 13 May in a spirit of tranquillity and satisfaction, the black poet Carlos Assumpção (born in Teite, São Paulo State, in 1927) gives vent to feelings of anger in his poem *Protesto*:

Although my words of fire are not heeded,
I shall not cease from crying out
No. I shall not cease from crying out,
Masters.
I was sent into this world
To protest
Neither lies nor empty show, nor anything else
Can make me silent.

And he goes on to say:

The Brazilian slaves always fought for their freedom, there should be no mistake about that. The black people in Brazil were never submissive and never yielded to their lords and masters. Right from the outset, whether in the countryside or in the city, revolt and flight were commonplace. In 1719, the slaves of the State of Minas Gerais planned an uprising against their white masters. The date was set for 30 March. In his book *Abolição em Minas* ("Abolition in Minas Gerais State"), Oliam José states that "the rebels had reached the point where they had appointed a king and ministers to help them govern the black country, so that there would no longer be slaves in Minas Gerais". However, the movement was betrayed and the uprising did not take place.

Quilombos, settlements of fugitive slaves, came into being. In the largest of them, there were a code of legal and moral rules and a tribunal to judge the most serious misdemeanours. The most famous of the many *quilombos* was Palmares, a veritable republic founded in the seventeenth century. The significance of Palmares, which soon came to be known as the black Troy, is increasingly recognized, especially by the present-day black movements in Brazil. Earlier in the century Palmares also had great symbolic values for the *Imprensa negra* ("Black Press") which was published from 1916 onwards by a group of Afro-Brazilians, and for such movements as *Frente negra* ("Black Front") which was launched in São Paulo in the 1930s.

A genuine black hero emerged from Palmares. This was Zumbi, a black warrior who fought against the slave-owners. A "Short History of Brazilian Blacks" published in Brazil in 1976 describes how "After two years' resistance, the troops led by the mercenaries Domingos Jorge Velho and Bernardo Vieira de Melo succeeded in destroying Macaco, the capital of the Palmares *quilombo*, in 1694. In the course of the battle, many Blacks perished or else flung themselves over the precipice surrounding the citadel. On that occasion, Zumbi managed to escape and lived to return and mount further attacks but, on 20 November 1695, he was cornered in his hideout after being betrayed by a former companion-in-arms. Outnumbered, he died fighting heroically against an enemy force." The date of 20 November has come to be the Day of Black Consciousness in Brazil.

For Brazilian Blacks 13 May is a day of reflection, on which they give thought to the consequences of the *Aurea* law promulgated by Princess Isabel. By way of conclusion, it should be noted that 13 May is severely condemned in the works of most black Brazilian authors.

One of them, the poet Oliveira Silveira, (born in Rio Grande do Sul in 1941) proclaims in his poem "Treze de Maio":

The thirteenth of May spells betrayal:
Freedom without wings
Freedom with clipped wings
Like
This poem.

And so disenchantment with the historical date on which slavery was abolished in Brazil continues to be a distinct and consistent theme in poetry and prose, indicating the way in which black people nowadays think about their condition. In his book *A noite não pede licença* (1987; "Night Seeks No Permission") Paulo Colina writes:

May
Thirteenth
One thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight
Sounds to my ear like a whisper
From the cosmos.

Watercolour depicting black slaves in Brazil is by the French painter Jean-Baptiste Debret (1768-1848), who went to Brazil in 1816 as official court artist to the Emperor Pedro I. Debret recorded his experiences in Brazil in many paintings and drawings and in 3 illustrated volumes entitled **Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil** *(1834-1837).*

Photo © Chacara do Ceu Museum Collection. SEITA Museum, Paris

Startled by sirens,
The night
Rouses me out of my sleep.
I turn out my pockets,
Looking for the pass
That will allow me
To cross the streets
Of São Paulo
In uneasy peace.

The Princess forgot to sign
Our labour permit.
I'm afraid that a living Palmares
Is still necessary.

The same sentiment is reflected in prose. In some instances, this sense of frustration is expressed with deep irony and bitterness. The following passage is taken from *A alvura das pálpebras* (1987; "Under the Whiteness of the Eyelids"), a story from a collection entitled *Quizila* by Cuti (Luís Silva):

"My grandfather told me to kill the Princess. I took from his hands the guts of my great-grandfather and used them to strangle the 'Mistress of Freedom'."

It is clear that this centenary year of the abolition of slavery in Brazil represents, for the black Brazilian, something that is still unfinished and unfulfilled, which has to be re-examined and re-evaluated. The black people of Brazil—and especially black intellectuals and black students—are today revealing the hidden underside of that historical event. Brazil has changed and, with it, its former slave population which, for a century now, has been gradually asserting itself by the force of its gestures, its actions and its words. Little by little, it is taking control of its destiny and its soul.

They are merely human beings, black human beings. What could be more important than that? ■

OSWALDO DE CAMARGO, Brazilian journalist and poet, is an active participant in the work of Black movements, especially in the field of literature. He is the author of six books, including "Black Writing—Notes on the Black Presence in Brazilian Literature" (1987).

Milestones on the road to freedom

BY LIGIA FONSECA FERREIRA

1500: Discovery of Brazil by Pedro Alvares Cabral.
1539: Probable date of arrival of the first slaves in Brazil.
1597: First steps in the formation of the *Quilombo dos Palmares* (in what is now Alagoas State), a group of villages where fugitive black slaves sought refuge after escaping from the sugar plantations (which absorbed almost 550,000 slaves in the 16th and 17th centuries). Palmares, symbol of resistance to slavery in colonial Brazil, held out for almost a century against many attacks by the Dutch (who occupied northeast Brazil in 1654-1655) and the Portuguese.
1655: Birth of Zumbi, the last and greatest leader of Palmares.
1695: Death of Zumbi. Destruction of Palmares. Discovery of gold.
1720-1730: Gold and diamond rush in the new province of Minais Gerais. Between 1701 and 1800, more than 1,700,000 Blacks brought to work in the mines. Introduction of coffee to Brazil.
1800-1850: Expansion of coffee cultivation; massive new imports of black slave labour to work on the plantations of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.
1822: Independence. Dom Pedro of Portugal crowned first emperor of Brazil.
1835: Slave rebellion at Salvador de Bahia.
1850: End of the slave trade.
1871: Promulgation of the *Ventre Libre* law, granting freedom to the children of slaves.
1885: Promulgation of the "Law of the Sixty-year-olds", granting freedom to slaves over the age of 60.
1888 (13 May): Abolition of slavery in Brazil (the last American country to abolish).
1889: Proclamation of the Republic.
1931: Foundation of the *Frente negra brasileira* (Brazilian Black Front) at São Paulo, a political party which survived until 1937.
1937: Prohibition of immigration to Brazil by the *Estado novo*, the government of Getúlio Vargas, in order to "preserve and develop in the country's ethnic composition the characteristics most faithful to its European ancestry".
1944: Foundation of the "Experimental Black Theatre" at Rio de Janeiro by Abdias do Nascimento.
1945: End of the Getúlio Vargas government: renaissance of black movements in several Brazilian States.
1950: 1st Congress of Brazilian Blacks held at Rio de Janeiro.
1951: Race, colour and religious discrimination penalized by the "Afonso Arinos Law".
1964: Establishment of a military régime.
1969: All mention of facts relating to racial discrimination forbidden in the media.
1976: Bahia the only State to end police supervision in places where Afro-Brazilian rites are practised.
Since 1980: Several events of international importance, such as the 3rd Congress of Black Culture in the Americas, have taken place. Black associations and movements in different States fight to win a hearing for their demands throughout Brazil: equal opportunities for prolonged studies; equal rights in social, cultural and economic life; elimination of all forms of discrimination in working life; full rights of citizenship; the qualification of racial discrimination as unconstitutional.
1985: End of the military régime; beginning of the "New Republic".
1988: Centenary of the abolition of slavery.

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Watercolour depicting black slaves in Brazil is by the French painter Jean-Baptiste Debret (1768-1848), who went to Brazil in 1816 as official court artist to the Emperor Pedro I. Debret recorded his experiences in Brazil in many paintings and drawings and in 3 illustrated volumes entitled **Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil** *(1834-1837).*

Photo © Chacara do Ceu Museum Collection. SEITA Museum, Paris

Startled by sirens,
The night
Rouses me out of my sleep.
I turn out my pockets,
Looking for the pass
That will allow me
To cross the streets
Of São Paulo
In uneasy peace.

The Princess forgot to sign
Our labour permit.
I'm afraid that a living Palmares
Is still necessary.

The same sentiment is reflected in prose. In some instances, this sense of frustration is expressed with deep irony and bitterness. The following passage is taken from *A alvura das pálpebras* (1987; "Under the Whiteness of the Eyelids"), a story from a collection entitled *Quizila* by Cuti (Luís Silva):

"My grandfather told me to kill the Princess. I took from his hands the guts of my great-grandfather and used them to strangle the 'Mistress of Freedom'."

It is clear that this centenary year of the abolition of slavery in Brazil represents, for the black Brazilian, something that is still unfinished and unfulfilled, which has to be re-examined and re-evaluated. The black people of Brazil—and especially black intellectuals and black students—are today revealing the hidden underside of that historical event. Brazil has changed and, with it, its former slave population which, for a century now, has been gradually asserting itself by the force of its gestures, its actions and its words. Little by little, it is taking control of its destiny and its soul.

They are merely human beings, black human beings. What could be more important than that? ■

OSWALDO DE CAMARGO, Brazilian journalist and poet, is an active participant in the work of Black movements, especially in the field of literature. He is the author of six books, including "Black Writing—Notes on the Black Presence in Brazilian Literature" (1987).

Milestones on the road to freedom

BY LIGIA FONSECA FERREIRA

1500: Discovery of Brazil by Pedro Alvares Cabral.
1539: Probable date of arrival of the first slaves in Brazil.
1597: First steps in the formation of the *Quilombo dos Palmares* (in what is now Alagoas State), a group of villages where fugitive black slaves sought refuge after escaping from the sugar plantations (which absorbed almost 550,000 slaves in the 16th and 17th centuries). Palmares, symbol of resistance to slavery in colonial Brazil, held out for almost a century against many attacks by the Dutch (who occupied northeast Brazil in 1654-1655) and the Portuguese.
1655: Birth of Zumbi, the last and greatest leader of Palmares.
1695: Death of Zumbi. Destruction of Palmares. Discovery of gold.
1720-1730: Gold and diamond rush in the new province of Minais Gerais. Between 1701 and 1800, more than 1,700,000 Blacks brought to work in the mines. Introduction of coffee to Brazil.
1800-1850: Expansion of coffee cultivation; massive new imports of black slave labour to work on the plantations of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.
1822: Independence. Dom Pedro of Portugal crowned first emperor of Brazil.
1835: Slave rebellion at Salvador de Bahia.
1850: End of the slave trade.
1871: Promulgation of the *Ventre Libre* law, granting freedom to the children of slaves.
1885: Promulgation of the "Law of the Sixty-year-olds", granting freedom to slaves over the age of 60.
1888 (13 May): Abolition of slavery in Brazil (the last American country to abolish).
1889: Proclamation of the Republic.
1931: Foundation of the *Frente negra brasileira* (Brazilian Black Front) at São Paulo, a political party which survived until 1937.
1937: Prohibition of immigration to Brazil by the *Estado novo*, the government of Getúlio Vargas, in order to "preserve and develop in the country's ethnic composition the characteristics most faithful to its European ancestry".
1944: Foundation of the "Experimental Black Theatre" at Rio de Janeiro by Abdias do Nascimento.
1945: End of the Getúlio Vargas government: renaissance of black movements in several Brazilian States.
1950: 1st Congress of Brazilian Blacks held at Rio de Janeiro.
1951: Race, colour and religious discrimination penalized by the "Afonso Arinos Law".
1964: Establishment of a military régime.
1969: All mention of facts relating to racial discrimination forbidden in the media.
1976: Bahia the only State to end police supervision in places where Afro-Brazilian rites are practised.
Since 1980: Several events of international importance, such as the 3rd Congress of Black Culture in the Americas, have taken place. Black associations and movements in different States fight to win a hearing for their demands throughout Brazil: equal opportunities for prolonged studies; equal rights in social, cultural and economic life; elimination of all forms of discrimination in working life; full rights of citizenship; the qualification of racial discrimination as unconstitutional.
1985: End of the military régime; beginning of the "New Republic".
1988: Centenary of the abolition of slavery.

LIGIA FONSECA FERREIRA, *of Brazil, teaches at the university of Campinas at São Paulo. She is currently in Paris preparing a doctoral thesis on black Brazilian literature.*

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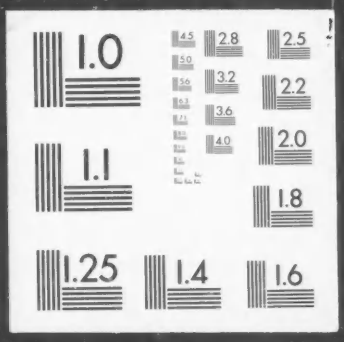
This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of the English poet George Gordon, Lord Byron (see article). This portrait of the poet was executed by an anonymous English artist in the early 19th century.

Photo © Roger-Viollet, Paris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